

JERSEY BEAT

#37

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Oh No!

Not another

AGNOSTIC

FRONT

interview

UNDERDOG

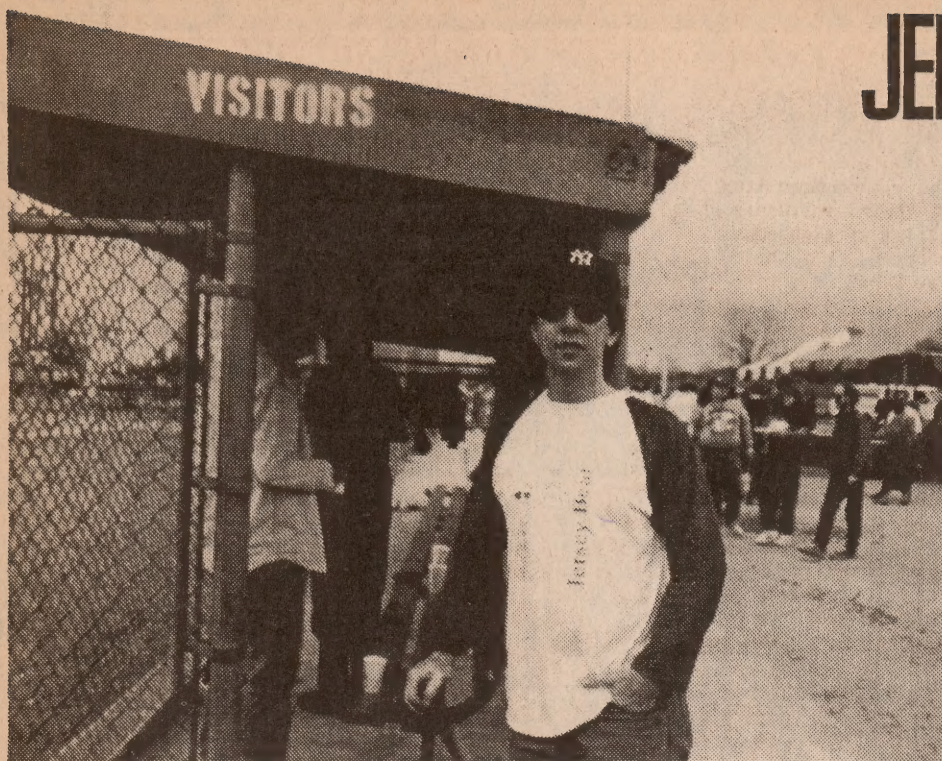
Youth Of Today

Lots of photos

Too many reviews



THE GENERIC ISSUE



JERSEY BEAT

418 Gregory Ave
Weehawken NJ
07087

1982-1989

#37 Summer 1989

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Guest Editorial

"When a rock writer says a record is a masterpiece, after having played it twice and filed it away with no intention of playing it again, it serves no useful purpose. For if he is so detached that he can make such judgments on the basis of two listens, then he is either dealing with unchallenging material or has nothing enlightening to say about the experience of that record. He can only categorize it, and put it away as fast as he can, before anyone notices that nothing has happened.

A critic must be prepared to do more than just say something new. He must be prepared to take risks, prepared to test his judgment, prepared to be unashamedly wrong. He must be committed to his subject. He must love the stuff he is writing about. He must continue to love it. If he loved it once and loves it no more, he must find out why; if the cause of his estrangement lies in the art, he must say so and explain why. If it is in his own changing view of the art, he must explain that too. And if he has lost interest because he has become preoccupied with other things - his career, for instance - he should find a way back to his past and start all over again."

- Jon Landau

April, 1971

from Confessions of an Aging Rock Critic

editorial

THE GENERIC ISSUE

Even before Youth of Today officially announced its demise as a band, you could feel their influence slipping away. The heyday of elitist straightedge posi-bands seems to have run its course. It would be nice if the next wave of New York Hardcore proved more open-minded, especially to new bands and to out-of-towners, but I'm not going to hold my breath.

What YoT leaves behind is a NY/HC scene that has become almost totally devoted to The Pit. Kids come to shows now to mosh, not to hear the bands; and what they do at shows has less & less to do with music or "dancing." As anyone who goes to shows regularly around here will tell you, it's getting violent again.

And I'm not talking "fights." A fight assumes two willing participants. When a 180 lb skinhead beats a much smaller kid senseless - to the apparent amusement of those around him - it's not a "fight," it's violence. Ten-on-one is not a fight. It's violence. Kids get pushed to the floor and someone jumps out of the crowd and kicks them viciously as they lay there. That's not a fight. It's violence.

I've seen all these things and more in just a few recent visits to the CBGB matinees. And I've seen a few bands with courage and heart - Underdog comes immediately to mind - whose members rush in to break this crap up when it starts. But I've seen lots of other scene leaders stand by and just watch; or worse, participate in the bloodshed.

Straight Edge has become an elitist buzzword with no real meaning. Straight Edge has just become another means to separate what's cool from what's uncool, the bands you like from the bands you don't even bother listening to. Straight Edge originally meant staying in control and not letting drugs, alcohol, or your libido rule your destiny for you. Well, I may have a few beers now & then, but I'm a lot more "straight edge" than the hooligans who get so stoked on adrenalin (a drug like any other) that they totally lose control of themselves, leaving a weekly body count of bruised limbs and bloodied faces in their wake. And this is supposed to be fun? This is rock 'n roll?

This is bullshit. And it's got to stop.

JERSEY BEAT'S SPRING '89 PLAYLIST

JED - Goo Goo Dolls
ENERGY - Operation Ivy
"BASS" EP - Soul Side

FOUR MILE DAY - Myra Holder Band

BORN TO EXPIRE - Leeway

LULLABY - Crocodile Shop

SALVATION GUARANTEED - Thee Fourgiven

PRESIDENT YO LA TENGO - Yo La Tengo

AMERICAN STANDARD - next issue, we promise



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by Ken Katkin
SPEED THE PLOUGH
Coyote

The first time I heard the Trypes was in the summer of 1984 at City Gardens, opening for the Feelies to an audience of maybe 5 WPRB dj's and 5 other people. I had very mixed feelings about them, since they seemed to combine one of my favorite sounds (Feelies guitar) with one of my least favorite (Eno-esque cadences). Imagine my surprise when my favorite song from their set - unbeknownst to me at the time - was a cover of Eno's "Here Come The Warm Jets."

By the time I gave my 20th listen to the Trypes' "Explorers Hold" EP, I knew that it was one of the 5 best 12" EP's in world history, and not just because of Messrs. Mercer and Million either. I still don't like Eno, but it took the Trypes to make me understand and feel what it was that Eno was trying to do. The Trypes were a real art-rock band, emphasis on art. Like Eno, they wanted to create a prole classical - a symphonic work on popular instruments - that appealed as much to the left side of the brain as to the right. They wanted to soothe rather than to rock.

The Trypes' ideas have survived the band's demise, via Speed The Plough. Since those ideas apparently emanated more from John Baumgartner, Marc Francia and Toni Paruta than from the Feelies, Speed The Plough succeed in gracefully picking up where the Trypes left off. Like the Trypes, Speed The Plough are reinventing the "Warm Jets." (Although my local daily newspaper says they're reinventing Peter, Paul & Mary.) Since they're from New Jersey rather than the U.K., their take on art-rock is one of the least pretentious in the history of the much-deservedly-maligned form. And when Speed The Plough really click, as on "Blue Bicycle," they're reinventing not merely the "Warm Jets" without airs, but rather "The Obedient Atom" (which they ought to have the guts to cover) without velocity.

I'm glad that Speed The Plough are from New Jersey. They're walking a tightrope, pulling together out-of-fashion ideas from across an ocean, and infusing them with a stubborn Garden State sobriety; with dignity and elegance and simplicity. I've never discussed it with them, but I imagine Speed The Plough thinks of their music more as folk than as art-rock. As such, they would be philosophically aligned with the Young Marble Giants (the only band I've ever heard the Plough cover), but not with Eno, Phil Manzanera, Kevin Ayers, John Cale, Lou Reed, or even Colin Newman. And as such, Speed The Plough defy art-rock's cloyingness, and transcend its limitations.

Speed The Plough can write their name at the end of a very short list. Like The Trypes, the Young Marble Giants, Wire's Chairs Missing and Eno's Warm Jets, Phil Manzanera's (and Yung Wu's) "Big Day," and very little else that I've ever heard, Speed The Plough have built upon the framework of 70's art-rock - one of the most bankrupt of all forms - and come up with something that I, for one, could no longer live without.

SPEED THE PLOUGH: MUSIC YOU CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT

THE PIT

No.3
Winter/
Spring
1989



SACRED REICH

EXODUS

KRYST THE CONQUEROR

SPECIAL FEATURE SECTION:
Interviews with 32 Colorado Bands!

REVIEWS

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CROCODILE SHOP

Lullaby, LP

Susstones

Thanks to the vagaries of indie labels, the Crocodile Shop that made this record is just as much a part of rock history as Mod Fun, the teen trio of 6T's popsters which gave 2/3 of this band their start. The current Croc Shop (Michael Hale nee' Mick London on gtr/vocals, Bob Strete on bass) have stopped using a live drummer (Lord John's Jon Figler on this lp) and have added synthesizer and drum machine, Laibach-ish vocals, and an Acidhouse/Disco sensibility to their sound. But that's another review.

Lullaby chronicles a band that's put the 60's affectations of Mod Fun aside in favor of an Echo-y, 70's-style Goth-Pop style. Figler's simple, crisp snare shots accentuate the strong, moody melodies from the prolific pen of Mr. Hale. His guitar, swathed in thick layers of feedback, distortion, and effects, plays everything from coarse, metallic riffs to Chiltonesque waves of melody. Produced by ex-Chameleon Dave Fielding and recorded at Water Music Studio in Hoboken, these songs continue a process of maturation that began with Mod Fun's last lp, Dorothy's Dream, and continued thru Croc Shop's 1987 debut, "Head." No matter how distorted or melodramatic the songs on Lullaby become, they remain true to the "pop" spirit of the Mod Fun years; fun to listen to, energetic enough to dance to, catchy enough to stick in your head. Where this band goes next is anybody's guess. But I'll be there to find out.

Various Artists

THE WATER MUSIC COMPILATION

Water Music/TwinTone

The "Hoboken Pop Sound" used to be defined by the questions "Who's playing Maxwells" or, before that, "Who does New York Rocker like?" But in the last few years, for me at least, the real Hoboken sound has been the records coming out of Water Music. From Chris Stamey to Crocodile Shop, punk bands like Alice Donut to weird stuff like Pianosaur, Water's warm sounds, warmer ambience, and crafty engineers have provided some of my favorite listening. This comp should delight Hoboken Pop diehards, what with its "lost" demos by the dB's, Chris Stamey, and Glenn Morrow, a terrific track by Let's Active's Faye Hunter (backed by 3 dB's), and a trebley, poppier remix of an Original Sins tune. You could quibble that there were more interesting bands available than Who's Your Daddy, The Wind, or Crazy Not To, but overall, this is the best hunk of Hoboken Pop since Luxury Condos. Grab it.

JOE HENRY

Murder Of Crows, LP

Coyote/A&M

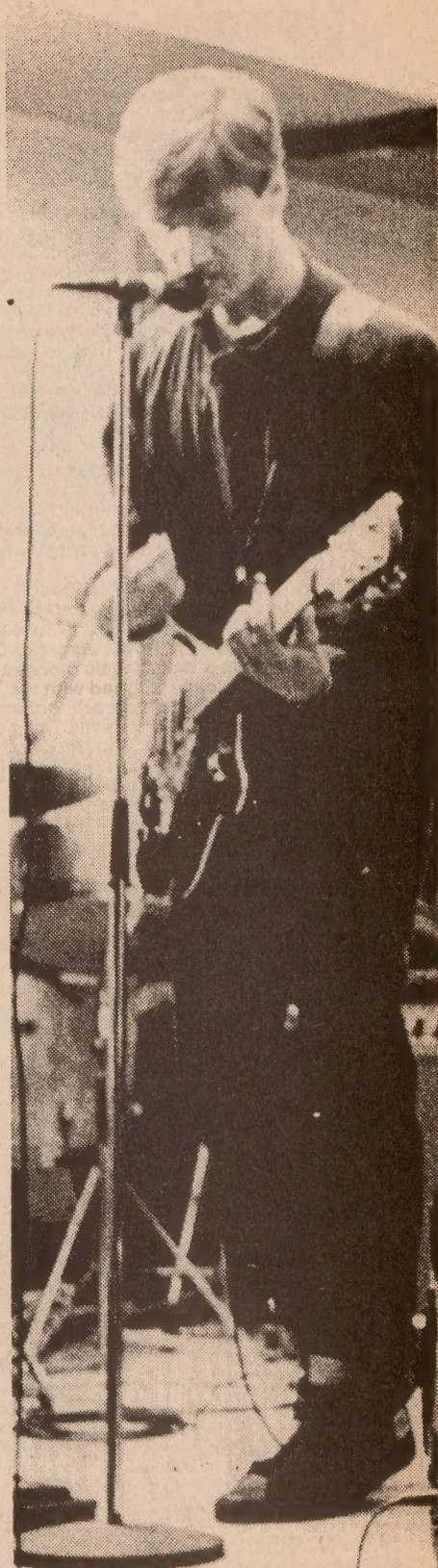
Joe Henry could be described as a more mainstream Tim Lee, or maybe an 80's Gordon Lightfoot. Whatever you call him, this is the lamest, least interesting record ever to bear the Coyote imprimatur. An awesome list of guest stars - from producer Anton Fier to Mick Taylor to Van Dyke Parks - doesn't help a bit. Recommended for Golden Palominos fans and other nitwits easily impressed by big name talent who make boring records.

ALICE DONUT

Bucketfuls Of Sickness & Horror In An Otherwise Meaningless Life
Alternative Tentacles

Tom Antona has the kind of voice that'll send you running for the Bayer on first listen; but once I got used to him, Alice Donut's debut lp, Donut Comes Alive, became one of my favorite records of 1988. Antona hasn't lost any of his wacky, shrill energy, but the Donut's 2nd long-player suffers from a bit of Sophomore Slump. The humor seems less sharp, the songwriting less inspired. Moreover, the Donut guitars have turned pigfucker wannabees, injecting unneeded noise-guitar jams into too many of these songs. The results sound gimmicky and uninspired; instead of Tom Verlaine or Thurston Moore, you get Ira Kaplan. Still, some of these tunes have that old Donut lunacy, esp. "My Life Is A Mediocre Piece Of Shit" and the witty "Sinead O'Connor On MTV." And when you hear Antona sing "I beat a man to death in the 10 items of less lane," at least you know Alice Donut hasn't sold out yet.

(above reviews by Jim Testa)



MICHAEL HALE

Photo: Rich Turnbull

IT'S CLOBBERIN' TIME!!

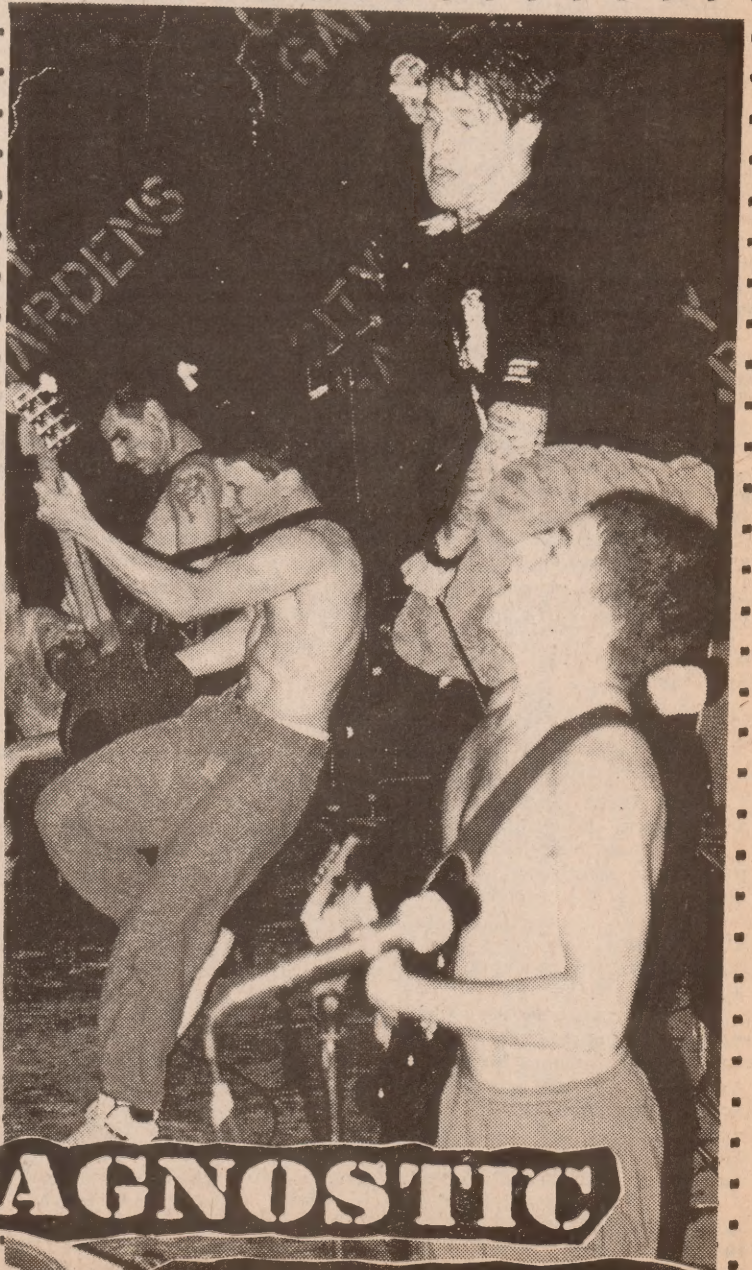
by Jim Testa

AGNOSTIC FRONT. For years, they've been the New York hardcore band. Through fat times and lean, good records and bad, they emerged as something larger than life - a cross between a team of Marvel Comics superheroes and something out of Saturday morning professional wrestling...hulking, sweating, tattooed monsters of Mosh. Wherever they perform - but especially in New York, where they rarely get to play anymore - their shows have become Events.

1988 was a year of ups and downs. Just as the band finished an enormously successful national tour, and seemed to have finally achieved its most stable lineup ever, lead singer Roger Miret was arrested in a van carrying a large quantity of cocaine. Miret plead not guilty and contended that the drugs were not his, but was he was found guilty and sentenced to serve time in the Cayuga Correctional Facility in Moravia, New York.

Ironically, the Front's music had always dealt head-on with confronting the system, with injustice and oppression. They combined that insurgent fervor with a fierce right-wing patriotism, evidenced when Miret would lead his rapt audiences through the Pledge of Allegiance at every gig. How to deal with an involvement with a public relations nightmare like a cocaine bust after all that? Especially in a scene like New York, so dominantly straightedge?

We discussed all these questions, and more, with the band's guitarist and spokesperson, Steve Martin.



AGNOSTIC FRONT

PHOTO BY KEN SALERNO

AGNOSTIC FRONT

Q: How's Roger getting along in jail?

Steve: Ok. I've talked to him on the phone, and (drummer) Will (Shepler) went there to visit him. It's not a high security place. Will said it was sort of like a country club actually. He's doing all right, he says he's really bored, and of course he's really hurting because he's missing watching his kid grow up. Other than that, he says he's seriously bored. Hopefully he'll be out sometime in May, and as soon as he gets out we'll be going out on tour.

Q: It seems like you've been getting a lot of support from the hardcore scene.

Steve: Oh yeah, very supportive. Why not? If there weren't an Agnostic Front back in 1982, there probably wouldn't even be a NY hardcore scene today... And there wouldn't have been this whole crossover thing either, or thrash metal or whatever. Because Agnostic Front taking that approach predates any other band, and they took a lot of the heat for it.

Q: I always thought AF and SSD up in Boston were the two bands that really opened up the metal/hardcore crossover.

Steve: I couldn't agree with you more. DYS were from Boston too but they were always one step behind SSD. And they took a lot of shit for it too. When it all blew over, then it became the biggest trend in hardcore, and now it's the biggest trend in metal.

Q: Given the nature of Roger's legal troubles and the big straight edge scene in New York, it's interesting there hasn't been any backlash.

Steve: It's not really my prerogative to talk about what Roger's in trouble for, but as far as that goes, I think most people realize he was more a victim of circumstance than anything else. It was more a dumb mistake than a malicious, manipulative thing he was involved in.

Q: It's ironic, given some of AF's songs, that he'd be the victim of the justice system.

Steve: It's very ironic. If anything, we can use it as a learning experience and forge onward to work hard enough that we can offset whatever setbacks it's costing us. So we're using the time it's keeping us off the road to do other things...do as many interviews as possible, and edit the video, and things like that.

Q: Do you find, doing all these interviews, that everybody who asks you questions thinks they already know everything there is to know about you?

Steve: Yeah, definitely. They just all say, you're this, or you're that. We did a couple of interviews with Canadian mags the other day and they were saying, "you're obviously very pro-American, how can you stand behind someone like George Bush?" And I said, you got it all wrong, you're just simplifying the whole thing. As five people, I can definitely say we share a common affection for the whole idea of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness...freedom of expression, racial equality, all the things that America is supposed to stand for when the so-called Founding Fathers got it together. But that doesn't mean we endorse the government. I couldn't be more skeptical about the government.

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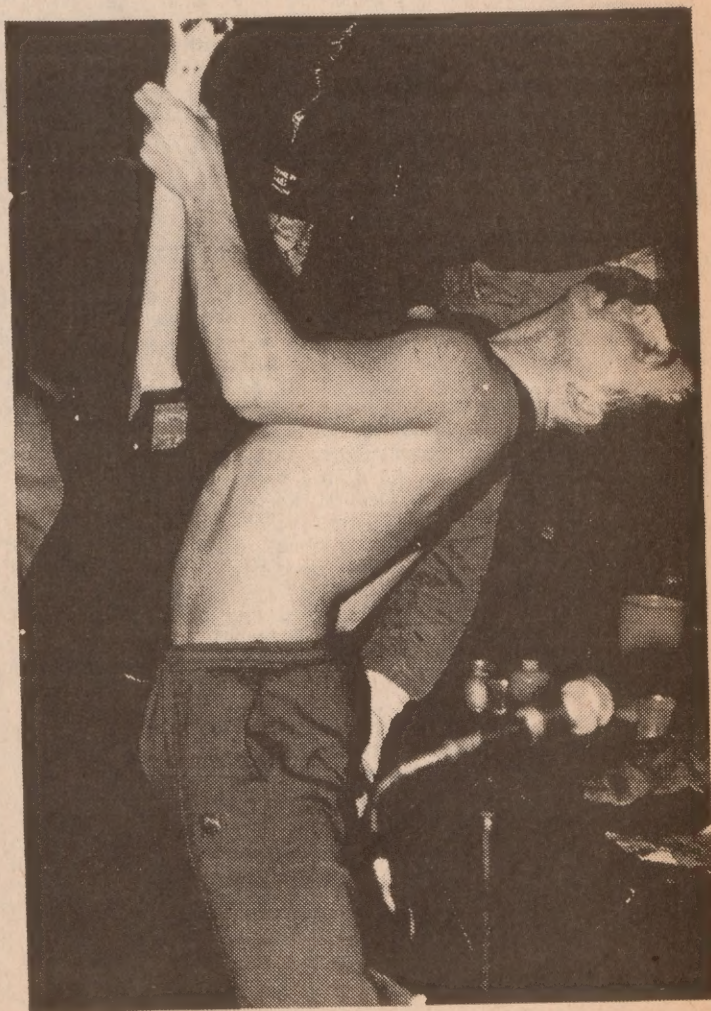


PHOTO BY KEN SALERNO

United Blood

Continued from last page

I think the whole "Agnostic" thing holds true across the board - the government, social situations, religion, we just question everything. And I don't think we're the only people like that by a long shot. That was a big part of when Vinnie and Roge and whoever was involved back then came up with the name, taking a stand like that and then putting a movement behind it, instead of just wondering.

Q: Moreso than the politics, I imagine most people think of you in terms of your stage image, these big sweating guys covered with tattoos, and don't realize what you're really like.

Steve: Oh, exactly. Like they get real surprised when they found out I'm a writer, and work at the record label. Or that Will is going to college. They're always sort of surprised that anyone in the band is articulate. Like, people are surprised all the time when they throw something at us in these interviews and Will and I come up with some totally rational explanation of why they're wrong. I think they were expecting us to say, "Where is dis guy calling from? Virginia? We're gonna come down there and fucking kill yas." But it was nothing like that.

Q: What do the other guys in the band do?

Steve: I don't know what Vinnie has been doing lately. He moved down to Jersey and we haven't been in touch with him much lately. Craig is a mover, he moves furniture. Will is going to school at the College of Staten Island, where he lives. I work here at Relativity Records and do some writing on the side. And Roger, when he's not in the predicament that he's in, does carpentry work. We're normal people. We're work ethic people. I'm sure we could live off the band, if we put out another record, toured all year round, we wouldn't need day jobs. We could definitely make a nice living. But I think it's a nice way to keep your original drive there to work a real 9-to-5 kind of job. It's keep your head from flying off into the clouds.

Q: It must be frustrating for you guys, given the current state of the NY club scene. You have to tour if you want to play. About the only place in New York big enough for you anymore is the Ritz.

Steve: We don't want to play ourselves out anywhere, but I don't think we could do that in New York anyway. Everytime we play anyplace in NY it's just crazy, you know?

Q: CBGB is really too small for you now.

Steve: Yeah, we play there out of loyalty now. I mean, you have to be loyal to the club that started it all, and that the band was fighting to keep open all those years.

Q: It gets to the point where it's actually dangerous for you to play there now, with the kind of crowds you draw.

Steve: Oh yeah, it is, it definitely is. People getting hurt, people passing out from the heat, in January. And the Ritz will only have us maybe twice a year.

Q: So I also understand you've signed to a new booking agency.

Yeah. We tried to do it ourselves for years. You know, people say, take it to the streets and do it yourself and all that. And we tried to do it that way for years. But you know what? We got so fucking ripped off, it was unbelievable. These people, they'd say, oh yeah, we're your friends. Yeah, they were our friends when it started but not when it was over. And it wasn't out of malice that they were ripping us off, just plain stupid incompetence. And that's what it comes down to. If you want something to get done, you have to go to someone who knows how to do it. So now we're signed to this agency, MBA - Music Business Agency. Us and Murphy's Law are doing it. And if anyone wants to get in touch with us about shows, it's (212) 477-2320, in case John Scher happens to read Jersey Beat. This guy's got a very eclectic roster, he handles everybody from the Butthole Surfers to Hot Tuna. This guy is very diverse, he's not just looking to cash in on metal or something.

Q: When you go on tour, what's the Agnostic Front entourage like? How many people do you take with you on the road?

Steve: Just the band and two roadies. We might travel with a manager this year, because it's gonna be a little more hectic and the money will be bigger.

Q: I can't imagine you guys going up to some promoter and asking to get paid and getting told, "Beat it, wimps."

Steve: I know, everyone's afraid we'll never come back and we'll beat them up and shit.

Q: That's one time when your image works in your favor, I guess.

Steve: Yeah, 'cos it's like, uh oh, New York. Because people are afraid of New York.

Continued on next page

Agnostic Front

Continued from last page

Q: Do you switch the set around a lot from night to night?

Steve: Oh yeah, we switch it around a lot. We don't have a xeroxed set list. Sometimes we don't even use a set list. There are some songs we always do back to back, because they work good that way. Like "Blind Justice" and "Last Warning" we always do together. "Toxic Shock" and "United & Strong." We usually do the "Victim In Pain"/"Public Assistance" segue. We jumble it up a lot though.

Q: I would think it's more fun that way.

Steve: It is more fun that way. And I want to start writing on the road, too. Because I've heard tapes of us in the middle of tours when we've been on the road for weeks and weeks, and we're just so much tighter then, it's amazing. So if we could just come right off the road and do the next studio album, it'd be great. I think it would be the best thing we could ever do.

Q: How do you come up with new songs?

Steve: Just a bit at a time. And it all goes thru the final democratic process of the band. This next record I hope we get more participation from everyone in the band, because the last studio album, the new lineup was just starting to come together. But this lineup has been together since November, '87. It's been a while.

Q: I always had the feeling that you add songs kind of slowly to the set.

Steve: Yeah, we do. We're pretty particular. I don't think you'll ever hear an Agnostic Front album that'll be a radical digression from their original style, no matter how much more intricate the music might get. Because we're always questioning...it's like, I don't think that'll go over, or I don't totally love that part...and then that has to go. That's it. There have been lines and segments of songs that I've really loved that everyone else couldn't rock on, so if five out of five people can't love the music passionately, then fuck it, it has to go.

Q: What are you guys like in rehearsal? Because you're so intense on stage...

Steve: Lots of fucking screaming, fighting, fist fights, breaking boxes over one another's heads... Our rehearsals are like Sunday morning wrestling on tv. Roger and Vinne strangling each other, Craig kicking his bass cabinet if he can't get the right sound, I get all frustrated and throw things. Will pretty much just goes with the flow. We work hard. It's scary. Sometimes Vinnie really goes off in rehearsal and you have to watch out or you get a guitar over your head.

Q: Do you remember the review I wrote of your show at the New Music Seminar last summer, when I said that the whole room seemed to come together over your music? Are you aware of that kind of vibe from the stage?

Steve: Oh yeah, definitely. A lot of bands when they play, you see fighting between different kinds of crowds in the audience. But when we play, we really haven't had that much of a problem with it. You'd think that we would given the size of the crowds in some city, but it's nothing we can't stop. The one time we had a problem, I think it was in Cincinnati, and we just walked off, we said, fuck you, we didn't drive 15 hours to come and watch you fight. And the next time we came back, there were even more people but there wasn't one fight. We taught them a lesson.



PHOTO BY KEN SALERNO

...and justice for ...?

Looking Back With Craig Ahead

In Mayhem, Straight Ahead, Youth of Today, and now Agnostic Front, Craig Setari - "Craig Ahead" - has been a fixture at CBGB for years. The little kid with the big bass is most recently playing out with his old Bayside, Queens buddies in Rest In Pieces while Agnostic Front tarries waiting for Roger Miret's release from prison. We caught him briefly before Rest In Pieces joined three other bands on Hawker Records for the taping of a forthcoming live compilation lp from that label.

Q: How old were you in your first band?

Craig: My first hardcore band, 15. When I was 12 or 13, I was in this band, it was just a cover band. The first hc band was Mayhem. We played CBGB a bunch of times...I was about 15 then.

Q: So you weren't even old enough to get in yet?

Craig: Back then, they didn't care how old you were, you just paid your five bucks and got in. When I got to be about 17, they started the age thing (proof of 16 to be admitted) and they used to call my mother before I'd play.

Q: How did you wind up in Straight Ahead.

Craig: Well, Mayhem was together, and Gordon didn't want to be in the band anymore. Then we got Rob (guitarist), the guy who's now in Rest In Pieces. Then Tommy (Carroll) went to singing and we got Armand on drums. Armand who's now the singer for Rest In Pieces. So it turns out that Rest In Pieces is just Straight Ahead with one extra member.

Q: Did you get to travel much when you were still in school?

Craig: With Mayhem we just played the tri-state area. We couldn't really tour because we weren't old enough, we didn't even have licenses. With Straight Ahead, we got out a little, we went to Canada, Buffalo, and the East Coast. We didn't really have any money though. Then I played in Youth of Today for a while and we did a lot of traveling, but I didn't like that too much.

Q: What do see as the biggest changes in the hardcore scene from when you started to today?

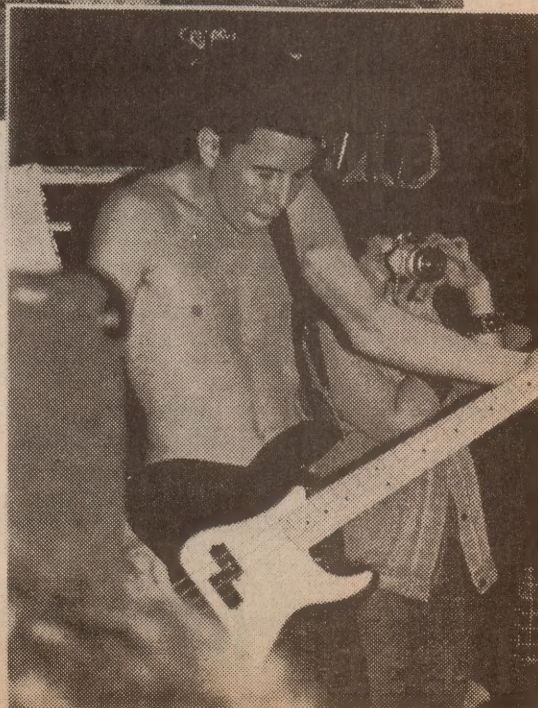
Craig: Now it's like no big deal. Back then, when I first came to hardcore, I saw all these people and they were HARD core. They lived hard core, they were poor. Not that that's anything to brag about, but it was more authentic. Now it's just like, hardcore, MTV, all the kids get into it...and then there was more of a feel to it. Today there's much bigger crowd.

Continued on next page



PHOTO BY KEN SALERNO

With Agnostic Front, above, and with Youth Of Today in 1985, below.



Craig Ahead

Q: Where did you grow up?

Craig: I grew up in Queens, in Bayside, with my mother and my brother. I had a pretty normal upbringing.

Q: So you fell back into Rest In Pieces after AF went on hiatus with Roger in jail?

Craig: Well, I had originally played guitar in Rest In Pieces. After Straight Ahead broke up, I joined Rest In Pieces on guitar for 2 shows, but it didn't really work out. So as soon as I was out, I didn't have any band, it was the first time since I was really young that I wasn't in a band and I was freaking out. And then Vinnie (Stigma) called me, because when I was young, Vinnie used to see me in Mayhem, he used to say, 'I like this kid, he's an energetic young kid,' so he got me in AF. Then when Roger went away, Rest In Pieces kicked out their bass player and I joined, and we even jammed with (AF's) Will (Shepler) on drums for a while, but it didn't work out.

Q: Playing in AF, and I mean just musically now, is that different than your other bands. The reason I ask is because when I watch you play in AF, you seem to play an awful lot of chords, which is unusual for the bassist.

Craig: With AF, some of the stuff is kinda basic so you try to fill it out. I throw in chords, and I accent the picking a lot, the way metal guitarists play, like triplets and chunk up the picking. And with my sound, I get a more bright sound but I still try to keep the bottom end, so I get that chunk. A lot of bassists just go for that faceless, just blend in, hold up the bass end kind of thing. I like to have a sound that stands out but still holds up the bottom end. With AF, I play a lot of chords because it makes it sound fuller. With the two guitars and the bass all hitting a chord, it's like this wall of sound.

Q: It seemed to me that it really started to change when Youth Of Today came down from suburban Connecticut...

Craig: Yeah, well, that brought straightedge and all that, and that was really big for a while. But now that's pretty much dying out. That had its good points and its bad points, but a lot of the people who were talking about it didn't always practice what they preach.

Q: I think it also brought in a big suburban influence.

Craig: Yeah, definitely. Before, it was a lot more from the streets... A7, the kids from the squats... Now it's just every kid's into it. I never lived in a squat or anything but I knew all the people who were like that, who didn't have homes or anything.



PHOTO BY KEN SALERNO



PHOTO BY KEN SALERNO

When Youth of Today first hit the New York scene in the mid-80's, they quickly changed the face of NY/HC. These weren't street-tough squatter kids like Warzone or tattooed punks like Agnostic Front, but pampered suburban youth.

They didn't invent hardcore, but had it handed down to them by first generation bands like Minor Threat. Soon, the Youth of Today image - rowdy slamdancing bridge 'n tunnel teens in oversized sweatshirts and Nikes - replaced the stereotypical New York skinhead. The militant straightedge lyrics and personal style of singer Ray Cappo and guitarist John Porcelly - backed by a constantly changing cast of bassists and drummers - became, first, a trend; then the status quo; and finally, a cliché. With their participation in Revelation and Schism Records, YoT found themselves surrounded by an ever-growing number of like-minded (and sounding) bands - Bold, Sick Of It All, Gorilla Biscuits, Side By Side...

Just when everyone thought Youth of Today had broken up, the band resurfaced, signed to Caroline Records (along with NY scenemates Warzone), and the debate began in earnest: Here was a band dedicated to "the scene," now suddenly signed to a large indie label, touring the world, and under near-constant attack (much like the band's guru, Ian MacKaye) for their militant straightedge philosophy. Heroes to some, villains to others, the New York Hardcore band for the last few years...ladies & gentleman, Youth of Today.

Interview with John Porcelly by Tony Rettman. Some questions suggested by Jim Testa. Since this interview was conducted, Youth of Today played a show at The Ritz (The Superbowl of Hardcore) in NYC and have toured Europe.

Q: What's the current status of Youth of Today?

JP: Ray just got back from India and we played our first show since we've come back at the Anthrax. It was awesome. We're going to Europe in February, which is gonna be a nice two month vacation.

Q: Is (drummer) Sammy going?

JP: Yeah, somehow he got off of school. I don't get it myself.

Q: When can we expect another record?

Continued on next page

Continued from last page

JP: We're probably gonna work on it when we're in Europe, we should record it when we get back in like April, before the summer. I don't know if it's going to be as long as the last record.

Q: Since Youth of Today haven't played a show in NYC in a while, do you think you've been cut off from the NY scene? {Note: In Oct. 1987, Youth of Today were banned from CBGB after the club asked them to have their fans refrain from stage diving. The band refused to cooperate with the stage diving policy and as a result, YoT hasn't performed in Manhattan, with one exception (the Ritz, January 1989) since.}

JP: Well, most of the kids who can see us in New York can see us in Connecticut. CT is only an hour away. I think not being able to play in NY hasn't hurt us, kids are still into us.

Q: Would you be willing to compromise with CBGB and play there?

JP: I'd love to play CB's! I don't know how mad those guys are with us still. I talked to Connie (booker) and she said things are still pretty cool, maybe we will play there. I've never talked to Hilly (Krystal, owner) but supposedly he's a real cool guy.

Q: Do you think you got a raw deal with the CB's thing?

JP: I personally think we definitely got a raw deal at CB's. I can definitely see their side of the argument where we had the power to stop stage divers, but I don't really see that as our place. We're not up there to play bouncer, we're there to play a set. Security is their problem. I think it was both of our faults, because we didn't really say "Stage dive!" and then again we didn't say "Don't stage dive." I think CB's is a cool place, I just feel bad the whole thing happened. I think trying to ban us and drag our name thru the dirt was totally wrong. Me and Ray went to CB's after things happened to try to get it straightened out and they were just total assholes toward us.

Q: Why have there been so many different bassists and drummers in YoT?

How Youth of Today Changed New York Hardcore

BEFORE



AFTER



**"I would
love to
play CBGB
again"**

JP: Drummers are always really hard to find. Our first drummer was just my friend from high school, and then we had Tommy Carroll and Craig, and they were already in Straight Ahead. Every bass player and drummer we've had has been a different era of Youth of Today.

Q: Is this the final lineup?

JP: Definitely. If one person quit, we'd break up. It's been the strongest and funnest lineup.

Q: Have you seen any of the principles you've sung about working in the scene?

JP: I definitely do, especially vegetarianism. Every show I play, even JUDGE shows, kids will come up to me and be like, "I'm really trying to become a vegetarian." I definitely think the things we say, kids believe, because we get such feedback. It's a great feeling.

Q: How long have you been a vegetarian?

JP: About 2 years now.

Continued on next page

Q: Why such a strong stance on it now?

JP: I think at this moment it's just the most important thing we can sing about now, that's how strong the band feels about it. I think the single most fucked up thing about the world is meat eating. I think it's such a shit-eating, disgusting industry, I could get into a million things on why meat-eating is wrong. If you just look at the whole philosophy of vegetarianism, it's about not thinking about yourself all the time and thinking about the world around you, giving a shit about other things besides yourself.

Q: Do you think in the future we'll have a vegetarian society?

JP: I really do. I hope in a couple hundred years people will be so advanced, meat-eating will be ridiculous. I hope! (laughs)

Q: What do you see at Youth Of Today's biggest failure?

JP: I wouldn't call it a failure, but the thing that bums me out about Youth of Today is that straightedge kids like us and that's it, and that sucks. Because we barely have that many straightedge songs, actually on our last tour I saw a lot more kids other than straightedge kids getting into us. I just wish more people other than SE kids would get into us. It really sucks that we have that reputation of "Youth of Today! STRAIGHT EDGE!! STRAIGHT EDGE!!! STRAIGHT EDGE!!!" Because other kids get turned off then, I think they'll like our records too.

Porcelly
confesses:
"I was a
high school
jock!"

Q: I feel you've been the 2nd generation of straightedge. You've opened up a lot of kids to what bands like Minor Threat did in the early 80's.

JP: I can see it as a second generation too, like back when me & Ray got into the scene, we loved Minor Threat. We loved SSD, we loved DYS, we loved all of them, then all of a sudden, around '84, it seemed like it died out. All the good bands totally died out, then there was this big surge at crossover stuff, and we looked around and the music that we loved totally turned to shit. Like, COC were the biggest band in the country, and me & Ray were like, "Fuck that! We want to start an inspiring band!"

Q: What do you listen to besides hardcore?

JP: I listen to rap, David Bowie, Elvis Costello, Joe Jackson, Devo, stuff like that. I love Black Sabbath, Metallica, a wide variety of shit.

Q: Before you were straightedge, were you a heavy drinker?

PHOTO BY KEN SALERNO

Continued on next page



JP: Yeah, personally I was, because I was on the football team & I got caught up in the whole "...yeah, party!" thing.

Q: Were you a jock?

JP: Yeah, it was just the whole atmosphere of the time.

Q: What does straightedge mean to you?

JP: "What Straight Edge Means To Me" by John Porcelly... (laughs) Everybody has their own meaning. My personal meaning is way more than not drinking, not smoking, not doing drugs. It's kind of a philosophy I have at respecting the world and people around you, not prejudging people. I think vegetarianism is definitely a part of straight edge, I think it's on the same lines as respecting other people, just respecting life. I also see it as not sitting around and letting life pass you by. People should realize you're only here for a short time, so you got to make the most of things, gotta do some good in this world!



PHOTO BY KEN SALERNO



ge-ner-ic \jə-'ner-ik\ *adj* 1 : not specific : GENERAL 2 : not protected by a trademark (a ~ drug) 3 : of or relating to a genus — **generic n**

Q: Does Sammy being so young get in the way?

JP: No way. Basically because his parents are totally cool, they're totally supportive of the band. He goes to this school called Professional Children School and it's all filled with actors and musicians, so he can get off school for as long as he wants. It's weird.

Q: What was the first show you ever went to?

JP: I was in the 9th Grade. It was Rock Against Racism in NYC. It was MDC, Crucifix, and Crucifucks. Tony, man, I couldn't believe it.

by Melissa DeSantis

While many ultra-heavy, speed-oriented bands are content to play the same style of music forever, Whiplash is continually evolving. Their latest album, "Insult To Injury," shows their trademark progression. Whiplash - guitarist Tony Portaro, drummer Joe Cangelosi, new vocalist Glenn Hansen, and bassist Tony Bono - have penned songs like "Dementia 13," "Hiroshima," and "Rape Of The Mind," full of razor-edged guitar breaks and unusual tempo changes. We asked bassist Tony Bono if he thought the band had made significant technical strides since their last recording, "Ticket To Mayhem."

"Definitely, it's tighter and more technical," Tony said. "The music is more complicated and the time signatures are different. But you can still tell it's Whiplash in the drumming and guitar playing. We have a new singer now but we still have the same Whiplash sound."

The group's fans have supported them loyally during their evolution, and Tony is confident they'll be pleased with the new lp. "When they listen to the guitars, the drums, to the heaviness of the music, I doubt they're gonna change their minds about the sound. I don't think anybody is going to be disappointed." Fans should expect to hear "experimental sounds on the next album also. We don't always want to play the same way, we want to conquer new things."

Whiplash is undoubtedly considered a thrash band by many fans, but Bono is really comfortable with that label. "It's metal," he said. "I don't even like the word heavy, just metal. When we play it just happens to come out fast, it's just natural." Drummer Joe, who's "really hyper," gets credit for giving their sound its propelling speed. The lyrics on the latest album seem to have borrowed some political/social consciousness from the hardcore scene. Tony, who "used to be a maniac for hardcore music," is "shying away from it now...but the lyrics do get kind of political sometimes."

Other influences include Deep Purple and Rush. But what about Metallica? Didn't the name Whiplash come from a Metallica song?

"Everybody always asks about that and I can't really tell you," said Tony. "The band's name was Whiplash when I joined... But yeah, I guess you could say Metallica was definitely inspirational for us."

As to the future, "Rape Of The Mind" is being considered for a single, and videos are under consideration.

There have always been a lot of guys named Tony in Whiplash - Tony Portaro, Bono, Scaglione, and Joe "Anthony" Cangelosi. It's almost a tradition. So where does Glenn Hansen fit in? "I have to tell you...his middle name is Don," said Tony Bono. "But well, that's pretty close to Tone."

WHIPLASH



Jersey Beat's esteemed editor has concluded that it has been far too long since my prose poisoned this forum and this fine magazine has gone sans column for reviews of demo and other tapes, so he has summoned me from semi-retirement and life as a sonic hermit sealed inside my cave atop this lofty perch and cajoled me into subjecting myself to aural assaults via C-30, C-60, C-90 and even the dreaded C-46 so that I may report back to you, dear readers, on the derring do of those intrepid adventurers on the very lowest level of this lowly substratum some (but not I) call the underground music scene. A thankless task, but one I accepted. So, onward!

At the top of this month's heap of oxide-coated plastic is a ten-song cassette from Upstate New York's MINOR CHARACTERS, a ragtag group dedicated to recreating the rhythmic and lyric stylings of Loaded-era Velvet Underground. You may recall the Characters' 3-song single a while back, when the group was fronted by drummer Pat Thomas, ex- of Absolute Grey. Thomas has since relocated to San Francisco, where he pursues his life as a folkie, leaving the Characters' grungier habits to his former partner, guitarist Bill Groome, and whomever Bill can coax into lending a hand. The ten live and studio efforts here make for a satisfying whole, but my personal faves are "NYU Girls" and "Molly Ringwald," both subjects near & dear to my heart (294 Walnut St., Corning, NY 14830).

North Bergen's FRAGRANT MOTH are a band with little ambition, both sonically (standard garage punk) and lyrically (witness lead-off tune "Let's Do Beers," which consists entirely of call-and-response along the lines of 'What do you want to do tonight? Let's do beers!') On a scale of Budweiser to Harps Golden Irish Lager, I'd rate these guys a Meisterbrau. (PO Box 5272, No. Bergen, NJ 07047)

New York's DITCH WITCH have an impressively packaged 4-song cassette that could be just your bucket of bile of speedmetal is your thang; these guys come on like a tequila-induced hangover (170 E. 2nd St. New York, NY 10009). And while we're in the metal shop, there's South Jersey's GIGGLER, who could have saved themselves the trouble of recording their 4-song ep by simply releasing vintage '71 Black Sabbath tracks instead of cribbing from them so fastidiously (832 Ross, Toms River, NJ 08753).

Two bizarre releases from E. Rockaway hint at the germ of an interesting if somewhat schizophrenic and drug-addled scene there. The album-length cassette by ANY OF SEVERAL WEASELS is for the most part driving, aggressive skronk with more than a bit of absurdity on songs like "That Sound Sucks All The Fun Out Of Waking." Many of the same musicians perform on the 7-song release by THE LOOK OF UTTER DISBELIEF, which is basically like the Weasels, only quieter; the standout here is a ten-minute (!) "Arnold Layne." (Both tapes from 61A Franklin Ave., East Rockaway, NY 11518)

cassette culture reviewed by I.cravat

Princeton's TWIG spent mucho dinero on a slick 11-song cassette-ep that slickly captures that slick Anglo depresso-dance rock thing. With all of this slickness, it's hard to actually get a grasp on what Twig is trying to do; nothing from this tape stuck with me ten seconds after it was over. Maybe they'll branch out in the future. (698 Rosedale Rd., Princeton NJ 08540)

SNAG sent an unmarked tape with no information whatsoever; their loud-fast-rules hardcore was equally generic, with lotsa shouting about anarchy and revolution. It was tapes like this that sent me up the mountain.



Disturbing the peace in Churchville, PA is ORIFICE, who conveniently (and honestly) describe themselves in their press release as "an angry mesh of industrial rhythms with grinding post punk guitar...machine shop rock." If you think this sounds like an awful lot of other stuff you've heard, you're right. Orifice does the Big Black trip extremely well, however, and they may yet grow into their own force to be reckoned with. (As a bonus, I made the surprise discovery that the other side of their 4-song cassette is at super-fast tape-dub speed and makes even more of a racket than the 'proper' side!) (19 Shadylawn Dr., Churchville, PA 18966) [This was Orifice's first demo. They have since released another, reviewed in GROT #4]

And finally, saving one of the best for last, there's a 4-song cassette by the Bah Gah's, featuring a survivor from Princeton's legendary Disturbed. This is sharp, snappy guitar grunge with pop underpinnings in the vein of Soul Asylum or, dare I say it, early Replacements. Probably one of the best 'new band' demos I've heard in a while, in the sense that it makes me actually want to leave my cave, climb down the mountain, and see these guys live. And that's quite an accomplishment!

And with that, I return to my curmudgeonly hermitage for some well-deserved serenity until Massah Testa returns with the next batch of Type 1 Normal Position Low Noise High Output's. Ciao!

MISS BLISS
Greek Picnic, LP
Ruling Factor

Miss Bliss is a band of five women from Boston by way of Burlington, Vt. (There's also a non-performing songwriter, Diane Horstmyer.) They play quirky, syncopated pop with an occasional hard edge. Don't think of Bangles or Go Go's when you think of Miss Bliss. If you have to think of an all-woman band to compare them to, think of Fanny. Or better yet, disregard gender and think of them as a rock 'n roll band with, as they put it, a few flavors and textures.

There's been a change in the group since their cassette of a couple of years ago, "Blissongs." That's the addition of Diane Heffner on woodwinds. She contributes immensely to the sound of the group, improving an old song like "Andy's Next Seizure" and providing color to newer material.

Of the songs on Greek Picnic, three originally appeared on the cassette. "Andy's Next Seizure" is a jumpy psychodrama that I like, while "Electric Housewife" is one of the band's strongest numbers. "Chauteau Groovin'," however, could safely have been left off.

The new material boasts several strong songs - "Mass Of Hysteria," a straight out rocker, "Corinne," a hooky pop tune with an off-the-beat arrangement, and "Slants Of Life," a meditative I-IV-V by Carol Defeciani, who plays accordion, bass, and guitar for the group.

Rounding out the lineup of Miss Bliss is Steph Pappas on guitar and Sandy Zaragoza on guitar and bass. They add to a very strong ensemble feel that is one of the group's strengths.

- Mark Fogarty



MAYFIRST - next issue, we promise

MYRA HOLDER
Four Mile Day, LP
Coyote

It is a cool Spring day, but it's sunny as well and there's a ray of hope here. It's been a long time a'coming, the long-awaited Myra Holder lp is finally out. There is one cut here that was recorded as far back as 1981, yet this record is most cohesive anyway. I've seen/heard Ms. Holder perform in both duos and with her quartet four or five times in as many years, and was always intrigued by her sincere, stark stage presence and the subtle beauty of her voice.

This record is the gem one could only hope for. It's magic is one that sneaks up on you. The somber, delicate treatment of the oft-ringing guitars by Dave Schramm (formerly of Yo La Tengo, currently fronting his own band) and Tom Quinn, with the help of Chris Stamey (who has done an exquisite job of producing). Everything about these songs has been handled with extreme care - from the superb back-up vocal harmonies to layered guitar parts that orchestrate the mood perfectly throughout.

The mesmerizing "Never Never" is an unusually structured piece with the vocal section only at the beginning. This is followed by a cosmic, slower Verlaine-like section where the guitars hover & sting subtly throughout the long instrumental second half.

Although Ms. Holder's voice occasionally reminds me of Marti Jones' sweet yet haunting vocals, the big difference is that Myra Holder wrote nine out of 11 tunes. The two covers are also well done and well chosen - Roy Orbison's "It's Over" and Alex Chilton's "Blue Moon," done in a touching acoustic rendition.

I hope Coyote does well promoting this folk/country/rock gem. It is most worthy.

- Bruce Gallanter

LIGHT APPETITES!

JERSEY BEAT

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I SEE NOTHING WRONG WITH HAVING GIRLS IN ROCK BANDS, MISTER!

from The Best of Dave Run It (Harper & Row, 1984)

SOUL ASYLUM

"Clam Dip & Other Delights," EP
Twin/Tone

Demos and outtakes that sound like demos and outtakes. Nothing seminal or even much different than the hit 'n miss Hang Time lp. One old Loud Fast Rules song redone, but big deal. The jacket is the cleverest thing about the whole record.

- J.T.

THEE FOURGIVEN

Salvation Guaranteed, LP
Dionysus, Box 1975, Burbank, CA 91507

6T's influenced punk-rock that reminds me a whole lot of the some of the peripheral bands back in CBGB's punkrock heyday - groups like the Marbles, Erasers, even early Patti Smith, who took garage-rock nuggets from the Sixties and used the simple 3-chord structure and tunefulness to reinvent pop music for a new generation. In other words, I like this.

- J.T.

THE CAUSE

"Kids With A Cause" demo cassette
208 Highland Ave., Moorestown NJ 08057

These 6 songs rarely escape the limits of your standard suburban hardcore - slow parts, fast mosh parts, and scream on the breaks just like Minor Threat. The band wins a few points back with their lyrics, which explore various facets of teenage angst with a fresh perspective. You won't get any straightedge dogma here, just songs about anger, betrayal, the frustrations of adolescence. And there's even a song about a girl, something you never find on the typical jockcore posi-band demo. Once The Cause finds a fresher direction musically, they'll be a cause worth fighting to hear.

- Jim T.

GROT #4

with

7 SECONDS

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by Kevin Seconds

OPERATION IVY

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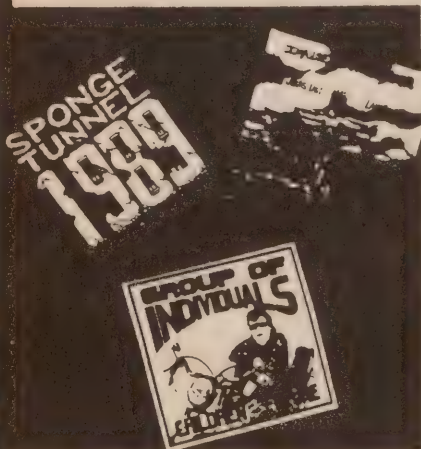
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DOG!!!

Declaration of Independents

A GUIDE TO BANDS YOU'VE NEVER HEARD OF

DRASTIC MEASURES demo

A 4 song demo with material dating back to last year. Although well produced and packaged (on Chrome/HX Pro), I can't say that anything here really caught my attention. There were slight glimpses of melody on "Miss Mistreated," and an interesting rap on "I Heard It Through The Grapevine," but nothing really exceptional to differentiate this stuff from the rest of the metal horde. I think a quickening of pace might do this already-tight 5-piece outfit some good...be a bit curious what's next for them.

851 Maurice River Pkwy, Vineland, NJ 08310

- Dado

OBLIVION

"War Gives Me Peace Of Mind" demo

Misery, suicide, and violence seem to be prominent themes on this 4-song demo from South Jersey hardcore outfit Oblivion. Screaming and angry lyrics with metal riffs thrown in...nothing new here, but ok for the format. 231 Franklin Ave., Seaside Hts, NJ 08751

- Dado

MASTER FURY

"Hell Party" demo

These guys sound like a bunch of impressionists trying too hard to sound like Slayer. I hate music that doesn't sound original. On the inside panel of the tape, it says "If not completely satisfied with the musical contents, go jump off a bridge and die." Well, I guess I'm in for a hell of a swim.

% Trademark Music, Box 1259, Brown Mills, NJ 08015

- 'Fer

SPUDMONSTERS - demo

This band is hella cool. These dudes know how to have fun with their music (pizza) and they can be serious with world issues (have a nice day). I would definitely go to see these guys at Studio One if they ever get to NJ. Check these farmsters out. 13383 Madison Ave., Lakewood, OH 44304

STICKS & STONES

"Inner Revolt" cassette

This was supposed to be the band's debut album on Positive Force, but innumerable delays forced the band to release it themselves as a cassette. It's Positive Force's loss, because S&S pour on the energy with some incredible music. They have a kind of loose feel that works well, with a 'dirty' guitar sound. Larry, the guitarist, is unharnessed and not afraid to try

some new things. Vocals remind me of Crimpshrine while the music reminds me a bit of Isocracy. Excellent lyrics that attack topics like racism and society in general. Eleven songs in all, and it comes with a photocopied booklet of lyrics and other assembled madness. Pick it up.

% Peter Ventantonio, 747 West Foothill Rd., Bridgewater, NJ 08807

- Tom A.



STICKS & STONES

Ken Salerno

.. UNDERDOG!

Underdog exploded out of the NY hardcore scene back in 1984 with the release of their 4-song EP on New Beginning Records. An instant collector's item, the music was raw and vibrant, with strong vocals by the band's charismatic singer, Richie. Russ Wheeler, then as now, played bass, but the rest of the band has been changed - original drummer Greg left almost immediately after the EP got the band national attention. Guitarist Danny left a little over a year ago, just when the band seemed close to an album deal with PVC. Unfortunately, PVC's financial problems (as part of the bankrupt Jem Records) ended that idea. The new improved Underdog finally has its first album out - The Vanishing Point on Caroline showcases both Richie's vocals and Russ' power basslines, as well as new member Chuck Treece's reggae roots. Dean Joseph has been the band's drummer for a few years now. He's actually Russ' kid brother, but don't tell anyone I told you... We talked about some of this stuff with the band's singer, Richie...

- Jim Testa

Q: How did Chuck Treece join the band?

Richie: It almost seemed destined. We had played with (his band) McRad a couple of times and saw him. Russ knew Chuck really well. I knew him just from McRad shows. But we had talked to him about it several times over the last several years. As soon as Arthur left, we got real serious about it. He came to the city to rehearse with us a couple of times...and now he's a full-fledged member of Underdog.

Q: Chuck certainly suits your current style perfectly, but did you always have an interest in the reggae thing? It's a lot more pronounced in the new set than I remember it.

Richie: Well, actually the song "Mass Movement" has been around since the beginning of the band.

Q: Did Chuck join before you recorded the new album?

Richie: Yes. Chuck did leads, I did all the rhythm tracks.

Q: Are there any plans to hit the road now that you have the new lineup and an album out?

Richie: Yeah. The album's coming out the first week of May - at least it's supposed to - and we're starting a bunch of east coast shows in July. Then we'll probably do the south, then the midwest, and then make it over to the west coast. I don't know if we'll make it as far as Tijuana this time, but definitely San Diego. Then we'll head back through the southwest.

UNDERDOG!



Q: For a band that's only released one 7" ep, you guys certainly have traveled a lot already.

Richie: Yeah, it supprises me. One 4-song 7" ep and we've done two nationwide tours. I don't even think that ep is a fair representation of the band anymore. I can't wait to get out now, especially with this new album coming out.

Q: The new set also has that song "Without Fear" which is very pretty, also something of a departure for you guys. The reaction after you played it at The Ritz (in March) was like, "wow, Richie can sing!"

Richie: (laughs) I've always liked to actually sing, it's just that the stuff I sing at home isn't Underdog type stuff. So I figured maybe I should start doing a little bit more melodic stuff. I mean, it's fun to scream and yell and lose my mind on stage, but I also do love to sing.

Q: Have you done any singing in any other context?

Richie: Actually, when I was a little kid, I used to sing songs for the Captain Kangaroo show when I was like 6, 7, 8 years old. My mom used to write songs, children's songs, for the show and she'd bring me into the studio with her and I'd sing about horsies and different colors. And when I was 15, I was in a rockabilly band, and I used to sing old Eddie Cochran songs.

Q: Going back now, how did you initially hook up with Russ and start the band?

Richie: I used to just hang out and see Murphy's Law and I used to see Russ skating around, and I used to skate too, so I just approached him one day and talked, and we became friends. Then one day I saw him at CBGB and I said, "How's Murphy's Law doing?" and he said "they kicked me out." And I said, "Wanna start a band?" And three weeks later, we recorded a demo that became that EP.

Richie Says...

ON SINGING:

'When I was a little kid, I used to sing songs for the Capt. Kangaroo show... My mom used to write songs and I'd sing... about horsies different colors...'

ON THE NY HARDCORE SCENE:

'It was a totally different image then...it was a much more underground thing. You really had a feeling you were part of something very different, very underground, very cool...'

ON YOUTH OF TODAY:

'As far as fashion goes, [Youth Of Today] were just modeling themselves after all the pictures of Dave Smalley on the D.Y.S. records...they just wanted to get back that whole '82 straightedge thing...'



Q: Back when you first met Russ, the whole New York scene seemed a lot smaller and friendlier.

Richie: Oh yeah. It was a totally different image then. It was a much more underground thing. You really had a feeling that you were part of very different, very underground, very cool. It's lost a lot of that for me.

Q: It's also lost the sense of being an inner city thing, and now it seems so suburban.

Richie: Oh yeah. You used to go to shows and see everyone you knew, all the same familiar faces, just the same few kids. And there were kids from the suburbs, but it was always the same few kids who came into the city every single weekend at all the shows. And now it's mobbed.

Q: Do you also get the sense that it's all new faces about every six weeks nowadays?

Richie: Absolutely. I'm not sure that's necessarily bad but it's there... a big turnaround in the audience all the time.

Q: How did you come to leave the band for a while to play with Youth of Today?

Richie: Well, I was really frustrated. I wasn't very happy and I didn't think we were as good as we could have been, and I was having problems with Danny (original guitarist), and it was just a very unhappy period for me. And at the time, I was very good friends with John Porcelly, in fact I still am very good friends with him. And he was telling me to come play guitar with them. And when Youth Of Today started, I was really into them, I thought they were real raw and a real return to early hardcore. And at first, I thought it would just be that I'd play with Youth Of Today on the side. But I found that wasn't possible, you can't be in two bands. So I left Underdog and went away on tour with Youth of Today. And about a third of the way through the tour, I realized I missed singing, and I told those guys that the last date of the tour would be my last date with Youth of Today. I guess I was out of Underdog about, oh, 8 months maybe. But, I had met up with Russ, with the guys, in Chicago, and I told him what my intentions were. The last show of the tour was at the Anthrax and a couple days later I was in the rehearsal studio with Underdog.

UNDERDOG

Q: Youth of Today really changed the image of NY/HC from the street kids living in the squats to the suburban jocks in their Nikes and sweatshirts.

Richie: I agree but Youth Of Today did it unconsciously, I think. And as far as the fashion goes, you can even ask Porcelly, they were just modeling themselves after all the pictures of Dave Smalley on the D.V.S. records. They were just trying to get back that whole '82 Straight Edge thing. I think they were just paying homage to it. I don't think they expected the explosion that followed. And actually, a lot of their following were more jock-minded and elitist than the band members themselves. I know that for a fact. But I think it's unfortunate that hardcore lost a lot of its punk thing. I think now the pendulum has changed directions and is swinging the other way. Sort of a happy medium.



ON HARDCORE:

'Really, I can't think of another form of music where a bunch of kids can get together and start a band and, literally, be ready in a couple of months to put out a 7" ep and go out on tour...'

Q: On the positive side, it's really expanded the hardcore audience.

Richie: Really. I can't think of any other form of music where a bunch of kids can get together and start a band a literally, in a couple of months, be ready to put out a 7" EP and go out on tour. It's really amazing. I think there's probably a glut of bands right now. I think there's a few too many. But there are a lot of great bands out there.

Q: When you tour, how do find people in other cities think of Underdog, in terms of being part of any certain scene or whatever?

Richie: A lot of people just don't know what to think of us. I've had kids walk up to me in the flight jackets and Doc Martens and say "You guys are my favorite skinhead band" and then other kids say, "You guys are my favorite straightedge band," or whatever. But I think once they see the set, they get the gist of what we're about.

By Bruce Gallanter

YO LA TENGO

President Yo La Tengo, LP

Coyote

These are some troubled times. Mankind seems hellbent on destroying the future of the planet - its oceans, vegetation, animals, even one another. One can either sit up & take notice or attempt to forget temporarily. These two options seem well illustrated throughout Yo La Tengo's third lp, President Yo La Tengo.

As far as trying to forget, on the appropriately titled "Drug Test," lead vocalist/guitarist Ira Kaplan sings, "I'm not ready to face it/I wish I were high." All of us drug users can relate to that sentiment. The paranoia of a drug test is submerged in a lazy undertow of desire, as the narrator wants only to stay high and listen to Wake Of The Flood - a Grateful Dead lp! You are brave, Ira. Few cool folks would admit digging the Dead. What appeals to me most about his tune and about half this album is the slowed-down, calming groove that usually accompanies the euphoria that drugs often supply.

Perhaps the most distinctive part of Yo La Tengo is the glow/haze/shimmer of layered guitar parts buzzing warmly thru the brew. Ira has perfected the varying mix of feedback/distortion into solid settings. On the opening tune, "Barnaby, Hardly Working," the sustained-tone guitar drones hypnotically in the background. The energy builds ever so slowly, rather similar to their recent tourmates, the Feelies. It's as if we were surfing on waves of audial energy.

Speaking of surfing, midway thru side one we find a short instrumental interlude which has the same name as a rave up from their first lp, but is actually only distantly related. It's a mellow guitar/organ thing, like some theme music one might find for a 60's spy show, related to the surf sounds of that era.

"Orange Song" is the first real rocker on this lp, and is actually a cover of a song from the first Antietam record (close friends of this unit). This is where the eruption begins, the adrenalin starts pumping, and the audience starts jumping. Ira concludes the frenzy singing/ screaming, "Something I can't live with..." The guitars build to a controlled roar, a feeling many of us can't live without.

Quite similar to one of their main inspirations, Neil Young, YLT are equally at ease pulling off the acoustic side of their sound. The fragile, lovely "Alyda" is a prime example. So nice to hear brushes and acoustic guitar on a current rock lp, as well as some refreshing backup vocals from Georgia Hubley. What also makes this piece special are the subtle/poetic lyrics. They seem to be about trying to change things, trying to gather strength, but not knowing where to start. This lovely haze ends side one.

Side two also ends with another soft tune, an early Dylan song called "I Threw It All Away." This version also has that melancholy vibe found in Dylan's original. Nice mix of soft, strummed guitar & accordion (provided by Speed The Plough's John Baumgartner.)

This side is mostly made up of a long, 10 1/2 minute rave up of "The Evil That Men Do," which also appears in a much shorter version on their first lp and as that instrumental on side one. All I can say is, "Watch out!!" This piece firmly puts Yo La Tengo on the same turf as any other wailing/howling guitar-storm noise band, from Sonic Youth thru Dinosaur Jr. This is, without a doubt, YLT's strongest, scariest moment, and if you ever seen them do this live, you know what I mean. From the very first roaring note, there is little let up. As the rhythm team pumps ferociously throughout, Ira unleashes an attack of extreme, torturous string-strangling note insanity, always on the verge of explosion. His bent sound here is not so distant from the noise-sax players of yesterday (Trane, Ayler) and today (Charles Gayle...), who are the inspiration for such noise guitarists as Verlaine, Quine, and Thurston. The only vocals are the rare chorus, one line that Ira screams a lot, "When a man---walks on me." When they finally break into this part and reach that one moment when the guitar finally lets up, it's such a relief that the heavens split open for that much-needed release. A totally draining experience, one we all need at some point. So you know where you can go to find it...President Yo La Tengo!!

YO LA TENGO

Vote YES On Drugs



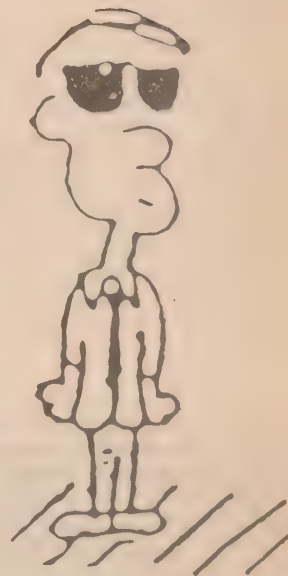
Revenge of the Nerds. Part III

by Jim Testa

THE SELVES, Cocktails...And Lots Of 'Em, Susstones
SPIRAL JETTY, Dogstar, Absolut A Go Go

Mike Reilly of The Selves sings nearly as badly as Jonathan Richman, with none of the childlike charm. And I hate it when pencil-necked white art-fags try getting funky. And yet... The Selves' best songs - and their new lp has a few of 'em - actually manage to justify the misspent boyhoods of such suburban nerds, jerking off to lingerie catalogs in their bedrooms, listening to Wire and Velvet Underground albums, when all the other kids were out playing baseball. On "Scientists," you forget how annoying Reilly's voice is; the song is that entrancing. And "Broken Homes" has that same fragile, vulnerable romanticism as, say, "Pale Blue Eyes," while my favorite tune, "When You're Home," has the band all wired and fuzzed out. And "Flying Carpet" is the best Lou Reed knockoff since Steve Wynn was still cool, kind of a cross between "New Age" and "Days Of Wine & Roses."

Meanwhile, Spiral Jetty take credit for actually inventing the concept of the suburban nerd (and I think DeRogatis gets credit for coining it). At the least, Spiral Jetty brought the idea down to the local-band level from David Byrne's astral plane. Dave Reynolds' Das Damen haircut and Adam Potkay's Wally Cleaver wardrobe notwithstanding, the Jetty's new lp, Dogstar, prove that even nerds grow up. In fact, this record is about the best proof around that going the local band route - putting out your own lps, playing a million shitty gigs in small clubs, and sticking it out for a few years - can turn even a trio of awkward (if sincere) half-baked Feelie-isms and T-Heads riffs into an original, compelling, and altogether un-nerd-like sound. Gravity has replaced skittishness as the band's principle characteristic. Adam's guitar has gained enormous emotional resonance, whether drenched in feedback or sparse & acoustic. One minute he's Thurston Moore; the next, Richard Thompson. Meanwhile, his rhythm team provides ample support, what with Andy Gesner's fluid, melodic basslines, and Dave's non-pareil drumming.



SUSSTONES

PO BOX 6425

MINNEAPOLIS

Wednesday, March 15: Arrive in Austin, Texas without a hitch. Why am I here? Ostensibly to attend SXSW, the third annual South By Southwest music conference, sort of a Texas b-b-q version of the New Music Seminar. Actually, I'm on vacation, but don't tell any body.

Austin has the rep of being one of America's coolest cities, full of bands, cheap rents, Mexican food, supportive media. Most of that is true. E. 6th Street is like a Disneyland of clubdom; it's the city's main musical drag lined with clubs on both sides of the street for blocks & blocks. Locals inform me, though, that it's not all gravy. Most of the time, most of 6th Street is given over to University of Texas (referred to universally in Austin as UT) frat rats, cover bands, disco babes, or honky-tonk cowboy music. Cruising around town tonight, two days before the official kickoff of SXSW, I get the feeling I'm either in Ft. Lauderdale for Spring Break or Nashville. Still, it is kind of cool to wander down the street and just hear live music pouring out of every doorway - "Little Sister," "Johnny B. Goode," and "Gloria" serenade me as I wander past t-shirt shops and pizza stands and mosey on back to my hotel. On the way I recall all those interviews with Austin bands like the Butthole Surfers and Nice Strong Arm who said they had to leave town because they could never find an audience. Austin loves music but the town's not much into weirdness.



SXSW

Alternative Ulcer

by Jim Testa

DIARY OF A ROCK CRITTER

Thursday, March 16: Things are going along fine. I spend the day sightseeing, not that there's that much to see. The LBJ Presidential Museum and Library is fun (I buy an LBJ coffee mug to bring home in the LBJ Souvenir Shoppe) but the Texas Natural History Museum is one room full of handguns and a few shelves of broken Indian pottery and that's it. Bump into a bunch of friends arriving for the convention, including Hoboken's Tiny Lights and my friend Dave from Boston, whom I haven't seen in nearly two years. Dave's in law school and getting heavily into publishing; in C&W, where the artists don't usually write their own songs, songwriting and publishing rights are big business, and BMI is a co-sponsor of SXSW. After more Mexican food, we head over the Austin Music Awards, an annual confab honoring local talent held at the Austin Opera House. If this is the opera, I'd had to see the circus. What it is, actually, is a large barn-like building with a stage and folding chairs all over the place. We watch Butch Hancock, a folk singer turned songwriting superstar (Joe Ely, Emmylou Harris have recorded his stuff). Some of the favorite locals - Rough Trade's big discovery, Two Nice Girls (actually 3 nice girls) and of course Timbuk 3 - confirm the Big Trend of 1989: Boring sells. Bar/None's Glass Eye win Best Avant-Garde Band (they're about as avant-garde as a Dairy Queen strawberry sundae). Glenn Morrow is walking around like a cross between Dan Quayle and Thurston Howell III, insufferably smug because Elektra or somebody signed Bar/None's big discovery, They Might Be Giants. (Also boring.)

Wednesday, March 17: SXSW officially begins - just like CMJ or the New Music Seminar, it's a bunch of panels - industry celebs and muckety mucks sitting on a dais, addressing important issues and answering questions from a bunch of bored college radio kids and fat guys named Phil in blue suits from the major labels. SWSW seems even more major-label oriented than the conventions in New York, and the spectrum of music represented seems a bit restrictive to me. No hardcore, very little punk rock, and only a handful of indie labels (incl. Bar/None) are represented. Metal and rap are each restricted to a small discussion group apiece. I think I'm the only fanzine registered at the whole thing.

Rather than give a blow-by-blow description of the convention, I'll just run down the highlights:

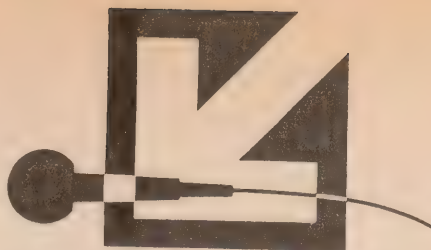
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Invocation by Mojo Nixon - Mojo was in fine form, ranting about the evilness of corporate Amerocka and how big money is destroying the spirit of music. It should be noted that Mr Nixon probably got paid more just to deliver his 10-minute invocation speech than all 250 participating showcase bands got paid over the whole weekend, however. He's especially good on the topic of the new Lite Metal bands dominating the airwaves: "Power ballad? What is a ballad?? You can't get a boner to a power ballad!"

Keynote Address by Robert Christgau - Every bit as boring and incomprehensible as his annual Pazz & Jop Poll essays. I believe he said that rock bands who work within tightly defined genres - like psychedelic bands, or punk-rock bands - are artistically bankrupt and always run out of original ideas. I don't remember him ever saying that about B.B. King or Howlin' Wolf, however.

The A&R Panel - Some of the finest minds of our time discuss the future of rock and how to get signed. After lying about how honest and incorruptible they are to the audience of (I'd guess) mostly unsigned musicians, they took on the word "alternative," as in "alternative music." Seems nobody likes that word anymore. It's had it. So what's the new word? Ready? Post-Modern. And some magazine in England is already abbreviating that to "Po-Mo." No thanks. I'll stick with Pigfucker, thank you. After talking about how bands had to work hard, gig incessantly, give up their day jobs, and release a few records on their own before realistically thinking about a major label deal, the panel did note that one of its members signed River Phoenix to a multi-record contract on the basis of his celebrity and two live club dates (both of which sucked - I was there.) Ahem.

In "The Future of Alternative Music" discussion group, a roomful of college radio jocks - led by moderator Scott Byron of CMJ - talked about how they choose the "alternative" music they play on their stations (by reading Gavin, Rockpool, and CMJ, of course, and playing what's already on the college charts.)



south by southwest

SXSW 89

music and media conference



The Press Panel - Actually, this panel was called "Whither Rock?" but everyone on it was a Rock Journalist. Gina Arnold was totally adorable and had some fun things to say, as did the fill-in moderator, Chris Morris of Billboard. (Bob Guccione Jr of Spin couldn't make it, thank god.) Gina repeatedly made the point that writers shouldn't give up on a band they love if they make one or two awful records, and she used the Replacements as an example. Afterwards, there was a small discussion group, in which some of the big-time writers joined lots of folks from small alternative weeklies (and one fanzine guy, me), and talked about all the sucky local bands we have to deal with. Everybody talked about their favorite bands and about how all the new hot names were so boring. Cowboy Junkies and Edie Brickell were mentioned a lot.

Continued on next page

Austin, TX



Friday night, the official showcase gigs started. It was awesome. Some 20 participating clubs, 250 different bands playing somewhere in town over 3 nights. And a pass to the whole thing was only \$10 if you weren't already registered at the convention. I have to admit I didn't hear anything that's going to change my life. Here's a brief run down of what I did catch:

Shoulders - local Austin band with a sort of Irish/swing flavor, very likeable frontman and a great horn man who played trumpet, sax, and a tuba.

Zero Balance - shitty new-wavers. They did a Zeppelin cover.

The Host - Tucson, AZ. The lead singer scared Jane Scarpantoni half to death, wandering around in a psychedelic stupor telling her he was Thor, son of Wotan. Before their set, they played 10 minutes of a Wagnerian opera. Then they go on stage in hippie garb and play a mix of jangly R.E.M. pop and overblown prog-rock. Later on Thor took off his shirt, revealing pierced nipples and a large thunderbolt tattoo. Jane almost gagged.

Tiny Lights - Yes, I travel 2000 miles and see a band from Hoboken. They were really good, drew a big crowd, and a lot of people were talking about them the next day. They got booked back in Austin two nights later, so they must have impressed somebody.

Alison Rogers - One of the 3000 country girl singers in Austin. Nice voice, not much stage presence, just like the biggest name to come out of the scene, Lucinda Williams.



SXSW

Alternative Ulcer

Bands I missed but which I heard were real good: Souled American, Wild Seeds, Scrawl, Tyrantswing. Boston's Dumptruck were there, complaining that Big Time Records is suing them for \$6 million. Wow.

Saturday, March 18: More seminar. More Mexican food, washed down with Shiner Bock, the Official Beer of SXSW. It's a fresh, tasty dark beer, and they sell it in the clubs there for anywhere from 75 cents on tap to \$1.50-\$2.00 a bottle. Everything is cheap in Austin. The real estate market is so depressed that a band can rent a 3-bedroom garden apartment for \$450 a month. With pool.

Bands:

Not For Sale - They released a record on Rabid Cat about 2 years ago and disappeared. They're back, still living in Austin, still combining crunchy hard rock and hc with melodic pop moves, and they have a great sax in the band.

Ed Hall - The loudest, wildest, most hardcore band I got to see from Austin. Cool.

Michelle Malone & Drag The River - I hooked up with Tom Roe of The Termite 'zine outta Tampa who got a job with Atlanta's Creative Loafing, one of those alternative (excuse me, Post Modern) weeklies. His roomie was managing this band so we schlepped over to Liberty Lunch to see them. Liberty Lunch is Austin's biggest club. New York has nothing like it although it's about the same size as Boston's Channel. Imagine an airplane hangar with a stage at one end and a bar along the wall. Anyway, Drag The River seemed destined for major label success. They were polished, cool-looking, and Michelle Malone has all the moves down pat. Plus they were boring, a big plus in 1989.

Mojo Nixon & Skid Roper - Well, kids, believe it or not, I'd never seen Mojo & Skid before, so I took this opportunity. Liberty Lunch was packed. If you've ever seen 2 minutes of Mojo Nixon on MTV you know what his act is like - a lot of funny, stupid 3-chord songs about Elvis and girls. Mojo reported that MTV nixed the video for his new single, "She Gave Me A Louisiana Liplock On My Love Porkchop," so in true 1989 Weenie fashion, Mojo killed that single and replaced it with a tune about the hot-line number you call when you spot Elvis.

Sunday, March 19: The big barbecue and softball game. Texas barbecue reminded me of the stuff the mutants cooked up in Texas Chainsaw Massacre, so I didn't eat too much of it. The Print Media team battled magnificently all the way up to the finals, where we lost to the Club Bookers team, 9-5. MVP was Don McLeese of the Chicago Sun-Times, one heckuva third baseman. Me, I stood out in left field and kept watching fly balls fly over my head. Which is kinda how I felt the whole weekend at SXSW.

And that's how I spent my Spring vacation.

SXSW 89

AUSTIN FUN FACTS

On your first DWI offense in Texas, they throw you in jail for at least 3 days and as much as two years.

Rents are ridiculous. I saw one apartment in a complex with a pool, with 3 rooms, a full kitchen, furnished, and all utilities, for \$325 a month.

The favorite scumfuck breakfast in Austin is authentic Mexican breakfast tacos - greasy fried potatoes, egg, bacon or sausage wrapped in a tortilla.

At The Austin Music Awards ceremony, the winners of the Best Heavy Metal Band in town thanked the Mayor and City Council for making their victory possible.

Wally Ross from SST got to tell the story about Michael Jackson's publishing company threatening to sue Das Damen for using "Magical Mystery Tour" without permission a bunch of times. Turns out SST had only sold about 1500 "Marshmallow Conspiracy" EP's anyway but the hoopla about the lawsuit was probably worth \$50,000 in free publicity for the label and the band.

Sexiest Label at SXSW: Rough Trade
Sexiest Panelist: Gina Arnold
Funniest Moderator: Chris Morris ("Whither Rock?")
Biggest Dweeb: Russell Smith (Dallas Morning News) who said his favorite record of 1988 was Linda Ronstadt's.

Austin Bands To Watch For: Ed Hall, Tyrantswing, Texas Instruments, Poi Dog Pondering, Siddhartha Suns.

Total Loot:
8 cassettes
3 CD's
2 LP's
1 45
2 fanzines
Pretty slim pickin's by CMJ or NMS standards.

MUSIC FROM NOWHERE

by mykel board

Mykel Board is off to Japan to teach English to the Japanese. Give him a year or two and the American balance of trade will probably be healthier than it's been since we dropped the Big One on Nagasaki. Anyway, during his tenure in the land of the rising sun, his fanzine NOTHING BUT RECORD REVIEWS will be on hiatus. Here are some of the reviews you might not have otherwise gotten to read if I weren't such a nice guy and sub-let a little space to Mr. B.

- Jim Testa

The following are reviews of records and tapes that are not widely distributed. Some are available in esoteric record stores, some by mail order from wholesalers, some only from the record company itself, and some possibly not at all. In rare instances I will list records that I distribute. For the most part, only independent or out-of-print major label records are reviewed. I have nothing against the majors, but they have their own publications. This is not one of them. I consider a record to be on a major label if the name of one of those labels (CBS, Warners, EMI, RCA, MCI, etc) appears on the jacket or label of the record. Exceptions will be noted.

There are NO bad reviews. It takes too much work to make a record or tape for someone to put it down because it's not their taste. If I like a record I'll say so. In most cases, there are at least some points to praise. If I don't, I'll describe it. You're big boys and girls now, and can choose for yourselves. Of course, if there weaknesses show in a generally good record, there's no reason not to point them out-- but the aim is not to show how clever I am by putting down someone else's work.

- Mykel Board

BRIAN LADD: Hammerhead/Fuckcharge [7" 33 from RRR Records, 151 Paige St., Lowell MA 01852] With the exception of some surf tunes, purely instrumental 7" records are dead. Viva the Ladd resurrection. This is a fine man and synth record. The music is dark, but not depressing. It's pure synth (including drums) but it's not new wave. It's got an element of noise, but the musician never loses control. And it's got rhythm without a hint of jazz. All-in-all there's some nice stuff here.

HARDTOPS: I Know A Girl/Indian Giver [7" 45 from STANTON PARK RECORDS, PO Box 58, Newtonville, MA 02160] The front of the record sleeve shows the four guys a the hedgehog who make up the band holding a surfboard. But this isn't a surf record. The A-side has the complex multiharmonies, acoustic feel, and low-key I-like-girls attitude of surf records, but the music pure pop. There are some fancy acoustic guitar solos here and an (unintentionally?) funny final chorus that, because of the harmonies, makes it sound like "I know a girl who needs a girl." Hmmm. The B-side is a lot more rockin' than the A-side. The guitar solos here are electric, though from from metallic noodling. This is party music when the kids want to rock out.

FLOWER: Crash [LP (1988) Bear Records PO Box 4725, Great Neck NY 11023] This is a band that has in the space of two records gone from being punk with a post-punk sensibility to being post-punk with a punk sensibility. There's no way of getting at the words (no lyric sheet), but you get the feeling that behind much of the brooding music here there's the anger and intensity that come from punkrock. The cold terror and screaming angst push through in "My Nightmare" and you can hear some almost hardcore (restrained only by the bass) in the angry "You Should Be Blind." Whatever their style, the key word here seems to be intensity.

CHARITY BALL: Demo '89 [3-song Cassette (1989) from Charity Ball, 144 East 7 St. (1d), New York NY 10009 (212) 475-7177] This all girl band could fool you. At first they seem so sweet and poppy, then on second listen you hear about putting "his head out on the windowsill" and "I wanna Unite Tonight." This sparse demo sits just on the clean bouncy side of the downtown scummers. It's a fine thing when more and more girls show up there. Sexy yet clean. . . mmmmm boy!

ERIK HAMMEN: More Stories from The Land of Milk & Honey [1-sided cassette (1988) from Eirik Hammen, 57 Three Bridges Rd., East Haddam CT 06423] "This tape is a little moodier than the last one. . ." so say the liner notes. I don't know "the last one" but there is a moody-- almost haunting-- quality to much of this mostly synth based tape. It's not all depressing-- although that's certainly there. For example we've got a death song saying "She was an angel, now she's a ghost." But there's also "Energy Around" that comes close to space music and "Projection" with almost bouncy rhythms and laugh-out-loudly-clever rhymes. The final "goodnight" is a pretty closing to a tape that is really not all that depressing, but sometimes just dark. All in all, it's more like a quiet room than a cemetery.

BRAINRUST: Brainrust [LP (1988) from Vinyl Communications, PO Box 8623, Chula Vista CA 92012] Most striking is the instrumentation, vocals, bass and drums. It's sparse verging on eerie. The songs are "political", but evocative, rather than preachy. There's one about kiddie porn (I think) one about US involvement in bad things everywhere, and one about American lifestyles. The messages are convoluted and thoughtful, however, rather than hit you over the head blunt. The pretty somehow sad female vocals may send shivers up your spine.

MUSIC FROM NOWHERE

THE OUTCAST: Life Signs [Cassette (1989) from Deep space Records 400 Mill Rd., Hewlett Woods NY 11557 (516) 791-6755] Talk about "deep space"! Those weird electronics, and dozens of sound effects sure could come from there. On one hand you get heavily harmonized popish vocals like in the song NEVER AGAIN (not about the Holocaust, by the way but about a lost love), you can also hear heavily effected ROCK guitars, a piano over hardsynth electronics even fake stadium applause and crickets! One song, about living in the modern world, has seemingly more traditional rock instrumentation. The best stuff on the tape are the moody purely electronic pieces one of which uses a laugh track as an occasional instrument.

AZALIA SNAIL: Direkto Sonnenlicht [Cassette (1989) from Wide Open Mgmt., 76 Charles St (3G), New York NY 10014] What is this, folksongs from space? It could be. After a rather long slightly normal jangle guitar intro, the vocals and heavy electro effects start. Its almost as if the words weren't meant to be understood, but used for their sounds or the mutations of their sounds through various electronic processing. Sometimes there's an almost childlike innocence in the music. Sometimes it sounds as if its under water. There's a small section (from a movie soundtrack) that's threatening industrial. Mostly, however, it's voice, acoustic guitar and percussion. A simple foundation, technologically bent weirdly and at surprising angles to make this tape.

ZUZU'S PETALS: Just As Bad As You (Almost) [Cassette from Hide Tapes, PO Box 1110, Adelaide St. Station, Toronto ON M5C 2K5 CANADA] This "band" is made up of the editor of the Homopunkzine JDs, some of ANTI-SCRUNTI FACTION and who knows who else. Of course, it's full of nasty fun-- not musically slick-- but fun as seeing a well-dressed person step in dog shit. You don't like it? "If you have a problem with the way we are, you can go to Buffalo in your TransAm Car." You get snippets of dirty conversation. An Indian beat song built around a record made to teach foreigners English. There are a few songs about dogs and a satanist anthem, "We Love The Devil." What else do you need?

CATHARSIS

"Uptight"/"Feel Your Pain"/"Mama"
Red Ghost

Catharsis are ancient veterans of the So. Jersey scene. Their guitar sound and song structures sound like Sonic Youth's would have sounded if Sonic Youth had come from New Brunswick instead of New York (that's good!). Unfortunately, their vocalist - when he sings - sounds like Jello Biafra (albeit with a slightly deeper voice). Anyhow, he talks more than he sings (that's good!) and this record has a real prick-up-ye-ears sound. You'd be foolish not to pick it up, even though you'll probably experience some of the same love/hate ambivalence with it that I did.

- Ken Katkin

B.A.L.L.

Bird, LP
Shimmydisc

This is a 20 song lp from the band whose acronym doesn't stand for anything. The "Bird" side is fairly hard, tho the band goes to a more pop sound on their cover of Dylan/Harrison's "Bangladesh." "Shelter" is sort of eerie and cool with its simulated attack of America while the band's vocal abilities are expressed quite nicely on "Burning Wood." Although B.A.L.L.'s been acclaimed somewhat in the past, I found this to be about average.

- DADO

BUCK PETS

Buck Pets, LP
Island

I'll confess to never having heard of them before, but via Andy Thomas and Chris Savage, this band possesses a powerful, guitar-oriented sound. "Hammer Valentine" is representative of the B.P.'s efforts to create that leaden wall of sound...and they succeed quite nicely. If I had to describe it, I'd guess file under "Hard Rock." But sometimes that's ok too.

- DADO

LEEWAY

Born To Expire, LP
Profile

Metal, hardcore, call it whatever, this is a masterpiece. It's as simple as that. Take the crunch of Metallica & Sabbath, throw in some heavy complex rhythms and riffs and mix it up with powerful vocals and you've got one of the hottest bands to come around in a long time. This lp has a lot of new material and also some tunes taken from their demos. It'll be a long time before you let the needle slip past "Rise & Fall" or "Mark Of The Squealer" but when you do, you'll find each & every track tune rocks the house. Big things are coming for Leeway, you can bet your last dollar on it.

- John L.

Local Records

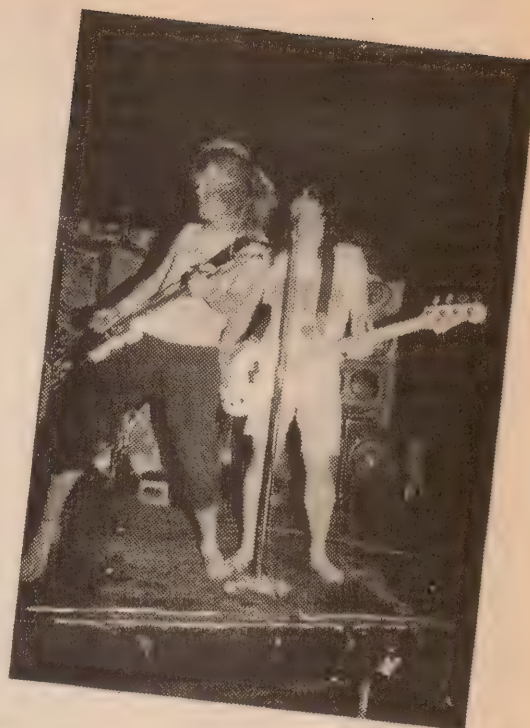
Goo Goo Dolls

Jed, LP

Death/Metal Blade

Best LP of 1989, so far anyway. Ok, so nothing here is what you might call "original," but hey, it rocks. Jed is the Goo Goo's Let It Be (I'm talking Replacements, not Beatles) right up to (and maybe especially) the plaintive acoustic ditty that closes out the platter, a dead cop of "If Only You Were Only" or something, but who cares? I've played this record more times than anything that's come my way in a looong time - silly sloppy grungy catchy and totally cool, one cut hotter'n the last one. If Paul Westerberg is looking over his shoulder these days, he's gonna see 3 scruffy mooks from Buffalo coming up hard...and gaining on him.

- Jim Testa



Goo Goo Dolls

Electric Love Muffin

Rassafranna, LP

Restless

I thought Electric Love Muffins were supposed to be drunk 'n horny, not petulant and sulking. Sure, I know they're desperate to escape that "punk band" tag (first time I saw 'em was at a CBGB Hardcore Matinee...where they DO NOT belong) but there's no reason to be so depressed. Lead singer and chief songwriter Rich Kaufmann's two biggest influences may be Bob Mould and Paul Westerberg, two guys who have done well writing songs when they're unhappy; but there's a big difference between the gut-wrenching passion of "Diane" or "Answering Machine" and the whining self-pity of Kaufmann's flat, nasal monotone. Guitarist Butch Lauer and the Campbell Bros. rhythm team strive heroically to inject some positive energy into the proceedings...and succeed somewhat, esp. on the instrumentals. But mostly, this record - unlike the band - is no fun.

(And hey, ugliest record jacket of the 1980's, no shit).

- Jim T.

Band of Susans

Love Agenda, LP

Blast First/Restless

I'm torn, because I like this record. I like to play it real loud and let the thick harmonics and wall-of-feedback guitars just wash over me. But who am I listening to? Band of Susans? Or Live Skull, or Jesus & Mary Chain, or Dinosaur Jr. ... The vocals have been so digitized, harmonized, homogenized and pasteurized, it could be anyone singing. The percussion endlessly echoes the same beat like a drum machine. The guitars are anonymous data entries in the feedback /distortion loop. The only "star" of this record is the production, and the only thing on Band Of Susan's agenda is the gimmick. Phil Spector, meet Dr. Frankenstein...

- Jim T.

Ultra Vivid Scene

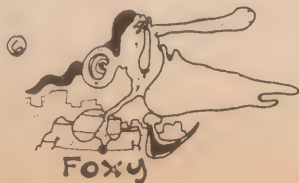
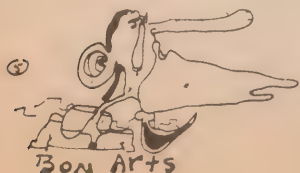
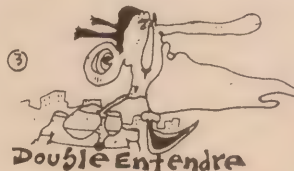
"Mercy Seat" 4 song EP

4AD import

Last issue's coverboy Kurt Ralske unveils the Ultra Vivid Scene Band here on two cuts, a crystalline cover of Buffy St. Marie's "Codine" and a haunting original, "H Like In Heaven." There's also the lp cut of "Mercy Seat" and an extended remix that reminds me of "Vintage Violence"-era John Cale. This isn't quite the confectionary pop that Kurt promised in his interview with us, but enigmatic, beguiling and quite satisfactory as a taste of things to come.

- Jim T.

Baboon Doolen Models the pony tails of Greenwich Village !!



© 1/83 John C. Gaudin

BASTRO

"Shoot Me A Deer"/"Goiter Blazes"
Homestead

David Grubbs has evolved from one of the purest punk guitarists in the history of the genre to one of the most inventive. Not at all the latterday Steve Albini that he is so often accused of being, Grubbs is more like an American (circa 1977-78) Keith Lavee. The two songs on this 7" are better than any on the Bastro "Rode Hard..." EP. Don't be a doper!

DIDJITS

"Goodbye Mr. Policeman"/"Dead Hippy"
Touch & Go

Another killer 7" from Chicago's Touch & Go label. The Didjits are like the Dicks crossed with the Sweet; hard rockin', fun lovin', angry and anarchic! These guys are real up 'n comers. The picture sleeve is genius. Recommended extremely strongly!

HOSTILE HEYDAY

"Freescape"/"Shuute"
Tantrum Records

Very collegiate-sounding music from Cambridge, MA. This record manages to be loud & noisy without actually rocking at all. Kinda like Phantom Tollbooth or Soundgarden. I'll never listen to it again.

CAPTAIN DON LESLIE PRESENTS...

Tattoo Songs (4 song EP)
Fowl

This record is somewhat of an oddity, sort of Woody Guthrie-ish folk music -- one, occasionally two acoustic guitars and one voice - are employed to relate four tales from the rich history of American tattoo art. Capt. Don definitely feels that his message is more important than his music, going so far as to admit that "though it may sound ridiculous, efforts to produce this enjoyable music was NOT my main intention." He's honest, but his platter is way too campfire-ish for my tastes.

SINGLES

by ken katkin

VARIOUS ARTISTS

"Dope, Guns & Fucking In The Streets
Vol. 2"

Amphetamine Reptile

Featuring Tar, the God Bullies, Helios Creed, and the Lonely Moans. Two 7"s. Ten dollars. Don't believe the hype.

CHEMICAL PEOPLE

"Black Throat"/"Find Out"/"Porno Run"
"All The Best Things"/"Aquamaa"/
"Hate"/"Who Killed Mary Lou?"

Bill Stevenson produced both these singles. The first is heavily Descendents/Dickies influenced, cartoonish ode to pornography. The tunes are good if unoriginal, but vocalist Dave Nazworthy is no Milo! Doesn't transcend its genre. On the 2nd, they try to convince you they have more in common with the Misfits than with All. The problem is - they don't! The Glenn Danzig cover is abominable. Ignore!

WILLIE LOCO ALEXANDER

"You've Got A Hard Time Coming"
/"Larry Bird"
Stanton Park Records

Willie Loco Alexander is a Boston legend who's been around forever. He's a former member of the (post-Lou Reed) Velvet Underground and has a couple of MCA lps under his belt. His main drawback has always been his undistinctiveness. This 45 won't change anybody's mind about Willie Loco Alexander.

TATER TOTS

"Instant Karma"/"Who Has Seen The Wind-Bohemian Rhapsody"
Giant

The picture sleeve looks just like the John Lennon original (which sells for less than this at Pier Platters!). The A-side sounds just like the original. The B-side, with ex-Runaway Cherie Currie singing the Yoko part, sounds just like the original, except for the parts of Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" (which sounds just like the original) that are mixed in. If this band wasn't Redd Kross, I'd just say: "Why?" Since they are Redd Kross, I'll try to restrain my contempt. Don't get this record if it's free.

LES THUGS

"Chess & Crimes"/"Sunday Time"
Sub Pop

The Feb. '89 "Single Of The Month" from Sub Pop hasn't yet acquired the "sold out" tag that so many of their singles have. This isn't because it's any worse (God knows the Nirvana, Tad, and Mudhoney/Sonic Youth singles were godawful). It's because Les Thugs are French and sound it. Kind of wussified Anglo-punk -- it "sounds" punk without being punk or even rocking hard. I'll probably spin this thing a few more times, tho, esp. since I do like their "Dirty White Race" 12". Not unrecommended, but not exactly recommended.

MUDHONEY/SONIC YOUTH

"Touch Me I'm Sick"/"Halloween"

If the Tator Tots 7" made me say "Why?", just imagine what this piece of shit is doing to me. The only thing I have to say in its defense is that it's easier to come by than either of the singles on which these two great bands made their own versions of these songs.

KILLDOZER

"For Ladies Only" Quintuple 7"
Touch & Go

Already sold out. Five different-colored 7" platters in one exceedingly lavish and somewhat hysterical package. All covers of big 1970's hits, from "Mr. Soul" to "Good Lovin' Gone Bad" to "Funk #49" to "American Pie." The whole thing is pretty funny and rockin'. I just wish that it wasn't a limited edition, because stuff like this should be throwaway, not highly sought after. Don't pay more than \$15.

SINGLES

by ken katkin

SOULSIDE

"Bass"/"103"/"Other Side"
Dischord

These DC punkers have placed themselves squarely in the Fugazi/Embrace/Rites Of Spring school of post-hardcore. That's fine by me. Dischord is incredible - 34 records, no losers! If you like Dischord records, odds are that you already have this one. If you don't, odds are that you won't want it.

REPLACEMENTS

"I'll Be You"/"Date To Church"
Sire

Yes, Don't Tell A Soul really is the first Replacements lp to totally suck. And yes, "I'll Be You" is Exhibit A for the prosecution. The non-LP "Date To Church" featuring Tom Waits, however, is better than anything on the lp. Not exactly a return to the Replacements' glory days by any means, but at least it's sloppy. Available for \$1.49 at J&R Music World, and recommended for any price under two bucks.

ANTISEEN

"Blood Of Freaks" 4-song 7"
Ajax

The self-proclaimed "only punk band in North Carolina," these guys are like a weird version of the Dicks from some alternative universe. Jeff Clayton's vocals are extremely reminiscent of Gary Floyd's, and the band rocks as hard as the Dicks. Their politics, however, are as right-wing as the Dicks are left-wing. If Antiseen had been present at the Tompkins Square riot, it's pretty obvious which side they would have been on. Despite this, this record sounds great. Recommended.
(PO Box 146882, Chicago, IL 60614)

KING KONG

"Movie Star"/"The Camel's Walk Song"/"Chicken Shit"

While 2 members of the lamented Squirrel Bait have been carving out their chunk of R&R history as Bastro, several of the other band members have been hard at work on less ambitious projects. The King Kong 7" features ex-Baite Brian McMahan and Britt Walford, backing the legendary Louisville folk-genius Ethan Buckler. The music sounds like warped Peter Gunn-style TV adventure music played by rockers who are too smart to feel obligated to distort their guitars. Philosophically reminiscent of Half Japanese (tho' they sound quite different), King Kong epitomize the kind of pure oddball rock 'n roll that makes America great. Only 1000 of these. Gol (2425 Bardstown Rd., Louisville, KY 40205)

DINOSAUR JR.

"Just Like Heaven"/"Throw Down"/"Chunks"

SSS
It shouldn't matter what I say here, since any Dinosaur Jr. record is a required purchase its first day of release. This genius 7" will do nothing to change that situation. One under-60 second original (which previously surfaced on the "Sounds Machine EP #1"), a mega-hardcore Last Rights cover, and of course the notorious A-side, which my disco-loving roommate informed me is a cover of a Cure song! If these guys could play live, they'd be America's Band. As is, they are America's Record Collector's Band. Their vinyl is 100% critical.

SINGLES by ken katken

PRISONSHAKE

"Deanna"/"Shook Like Roses"
Scat

I'm a huge fan of Ohio Rock, and Prisonshake are becoming one of the most critically hip bands from the birthstate of punk. The problem is: they're hardly one of the best. In 1989, when Sister Ray, Scrawl, the Death Of Samantha, Suckwagon, and The Mice are all Rocking Godlike, the perfectly fine and in fact good Prisonshake strike me as outclassed. Of course, if your wallet ain't empty, you could do worse than go for this pretty-looking platter (which sounds like a slightly REM-ized version of the above-mentioned bands). (Box 141161, Cleveland OH 44114)

MISSING FOUNDATION

Demise, LP

Humanity, 155 W 68 St #515, NYC 10023

A foundation is that which holds us together. Missing Foundation tell us that the link of humanity is gone - we have missed the boat. The vision they describe is incredibly bleak, yet somehow quite accurate. This is their third effort/nitemare and it is not for the timid. It is truly an ugly, extremely violent, undeniably painful soundtrack that won't let us forget that this mess is coming to an end.

Musically - or rather, sonically - this is a most dense industrial beast, made up of fractured tribal percussion, often indecipherable screams, and immense slabs of chaotic guitar & bass feed-back/noise. It really works, too. There are moments of unexpected textural change, where the drone of vacuum cleaners from hell speed up, slow down, or even melt away into another area of noise. And more screams than a shit-in-your-pants roller coaster ride.

Both the opening sounds of this lp as well as the pic on the inner sleeve depict the Tompkins Sq. Park riot of last summer, a harrowing incident that members of this band experienced (in fact, Channel 2 News accused them of starting it! - Ed.) In that riot, an army of NYC's Finest totally lost control. "Run for your life" are the few words you can make out. Like early Swands, the percussion pounds so thick, one has to give in & dive in. The vocals are often a suffocating whisper and equally disturbing, not unlike the vocals of another possessed spirit, Amor Fati.

It often sounds as if the machines we use have indeed gone berserk and are killing us all. As we get squished into the meat grinder of Fate, we all scream together. The mass/mess of humanity sinks slowly into the morass of greed. If you too see/feel some of what Missing Foundation is describing, then perhaps this lp should be your companion. Just be careful of seeing them live; that confrontation is more than just musical!

- Bruce Gallanter

VARIOUS ARTISTS

From The Eerie Shore, CD

Synthetic, Box 09478, Cleveland OH 44109

Nineteen tracks by 14 Cleveland-area bands compiled by Jim Clevo, the selfless fanatic promoter of the scene there. Most of the music on this CD is sloppy garage-punk with goofy lyrics, with a few folk/rock numbers and one synth/dance rock tune. If there's a new Human Switchboard or Pere Ubu here, I don't hear it, but then again none of these bands would sound out of place on Homestead or Shimmydisc. The man behind the CD is more interesting than the music; Jim Clevo has devoted his life to promoting Cleveland's underground scene, compiling these CD's and traveling around the country to new-music conventions to spread the word. He's either a lunatic or a saint; I just wish he lived in Hoboken.

- Jim Testa

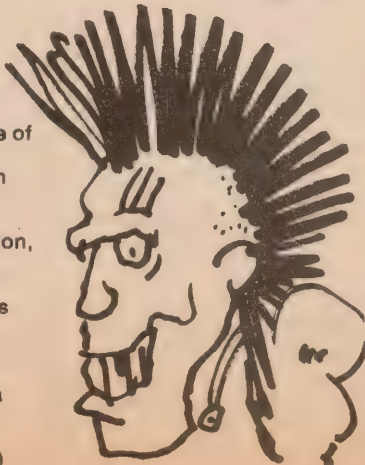
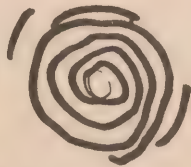
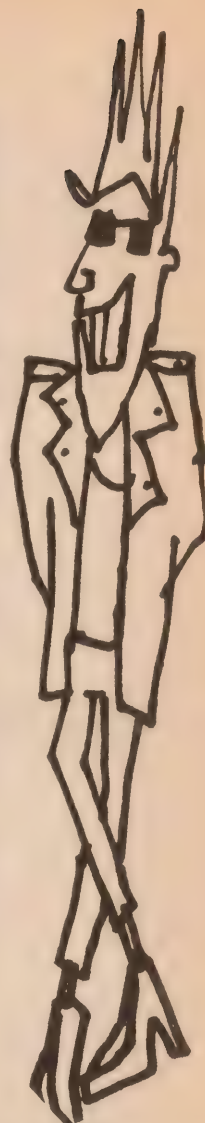
STEEL POLE BATH TUB

Butterfly Love, LP

Boner, Box 2081, Berkeley CA 94702

Think Buttholes, Happy World, Scratch Acid, and maybe even a little neo-psychedelia. Think pure Acid-Rock Noise-Guitar Psychosis (with Brady Bunch sampling for that extra weird kinky kick). Think of buying this record the minute you see it and freaking out. Best song title: "Through The Windshield Of Love." Where does Boner find these bands??

- Jim T.



WHITE ZOMBIE

Make Them Die Slowly, LP
Caroline

Yup, the painful shit-rockers are back with a deadly crunch, minus one noisy Tom 5 and plus one more structured new guitarist, John Ricci. Take a Misfits-type sound, throw it in a blender with borderline commercial 70's British pop/metal, add Rob Straker's fucked up lyrics, and don't shower for about 2 months, and you'll get the full effect of WZ's most listenable but repetitious lp to date. Sorta like if the Swans tried to do Metallica covers. You do understand that they wouldn't be too successful, but it would still be interesting to see what it would sound like.

If this band doesn't take acid, I'd say that a commitment to a mental institution is an immediate order, 'cos nobody writes lyrics like "Creature of destruction/laughing dead corruption/ challenge to survive/love butcher alive." The downfall of this scum rockin' metal disasterpiece is the econo-guitar sound, which comes just short of going over the top and crushing your goddamned head into the fuckin' wall. Better luck next time.

- John Lisa

MURPHYS LAW

Back With A Bong!, LP
Profile

A deliberate slap in the face to straightedged rock & a fuck of a fun album to boot! A lot more poppy & punky than their last lp and that's ok by me. What else can be said about Murphys Law that everybody doesn't already know? They're crazy-go-nuts-type guys, they like to have a good time and they drink a

lot of beer. They've also gained a lot of fans since the last lp. This is pressed on clear vinyl, for you collectors. Strictly for fun addicts.

- John L.

Short Takes

LIVE SKULL

Positraction, LP
Caroline

I can't even count what record this is for Live Skull, and no, they haven't shaved their heads and painted X's on their hands. But Positraction is a step in a bit of a different direction. This time, there's a lot more straightforward indie rock in places where there'd be droning guitar noise, but vocals once again circle around being melodic and come up quite short. Like W.Zombie's "Make Them Die Slowly," this lp has a low ended grungy sound and does the riffing trick where others would fail. This is also their most listenable lp. Thalia's voice sounds more distant & depressed, moody, emotional, and hypnotic than ever. The rhythm section is also at their peak of tightness. The rhythm guitar seems to be the forefunner of holding the tradition of Live Skull and it unfortunately throws the band back into the category of Noise Band which they've tried so hard to destroy. And above average lp for their diehard fans, but how long can they get away with sounding like this? Pick hit: "Demon Rail"

- John L.

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SCAB CADILLAC

Tagged & Numbered, lp

Rave, Box 40075, Philadelphia 19106
Rave Records' motto is "Fuck That Weak Shit," and Scab Cadillac's debut lp certainly does grab you by the balls with an unmistakably firm grip - throaty, nasty vocals, acid-edged guitar buzz, manic rhythm team doing 100 MPH in a 55 zone... Best songs drone like Husker Du, psychedelic guitar noise freaking out under the vocals. Forays into metal and jazz fusion don't do much for me, though. These guys are best when the rock out. Reminds me a lot of Squirrel Bait. Which is to say, not bad at all.

- Jim T.

FALLING STAIRS

"That And A Quarter," EP

Get Out 'A Town, Box 4186, Bay Terrace, New York 11360

Lots of people with their last name starting with "Mc" that play a good blend of country/college type music. It reminds me a little of R.E.M. and sometimes Soul Asylum (their mellow/country stuff). Impressive guitar playing that's sure to catch your attention. "Good Intentions" is the best cut, overflowing with feeling. Only 6 songs, too bad there weren't more.

- Tom Angelli

[p.s. I've seen them live: Good stuff! - J.T.]

JING

Jing, LP

3 Cherries, 276 5th Ave., NYC 10001

Arthur Jing - co-founder of the Shirts, the only CBGB punk-era band that never went anywhere - is still hanging around NYC looking for a break. Jing is his formulaic pop band, playing bland, innocuous power ballads, competently performed but about as disposable as the chili they serve in the CBGB Canteen.

- Jim T.

LENNY HAT

Place In The Sun, LP

Terra Firma, Box 6854, New York NY 10150

Imagine a kid growing up equally entranced by the wit and sophistication of Noel Coward and Cole Porter, and the rock/pop eccentricity of a Van Dyke Parks or Leon Redbone. Well, that kid grew up and called himself Lenny Hat and made this record (the first; he says he's already got six more in his head). Back in the days when pop mavericks like Dan Hicks and Van Dyke Parks could get record deals, this fusion of urbane pop, calypso, jazz and even doo wop wouldn't have seemed quite so unexpected or charming. Nowadays, about the only way a record like this comes out is DIY. Which he did. And I'm glad. A Place In The Sun is fun no matter which Hat Lenny is wearing at the moment.

HUMIDIFIER

Misery's Redeeming, LP

Lubricated, 1086 Tulsa St., Uniondale, NY 11553

Post-hardcore, I guess you'd call this. Hard, fast, driving punk rock. Husker Du seems a seminal influence, not so much in the sound but in the emotionalism, the urgency of these songs. Remember how you felt the first time you heard "Diane" off "Metal Circus?" Like that. Lyrics have a nice sardonic edge too. Pick hit: "You've Changed" Best metaphor: "Milk" ("I am the cow/you are the farmer/you get the milk/and I get NOTHING!")

- Jim T.

RICHARD YOUNGER

Blue Horses, LP

Rebel Toy, Box 625, NYC 10002

Younger has a sweet, emotive voice, and his songs are pleasantly seasoned with a mix of acoustic and electric guitars, percussion, and strings. The overall sound remains sparse and spare, something like Richard Barone's "Cool Blue Halo" ensemble. Anyone nostalgic for the era of the sensitive singer/songwriter will like this, as will aficionados of Lite FM.

- Jim T.

SCOTT APPEL

Nine Of Swords, LP

PO Box 141, Lincoln Park, NJ 07035

An interesting tribute to British folksinger Nick Drake, with Appel performing several unheard Drake originals (supposedly unreleased demos) as well as original tunes written in Drake's style. The songs are dry, delicate, acoustic tone poems, with gentle harmonies and interesting chord changes. Tranquil but not boring, this lp provided me with a quiet, meditative respite, and I will no doubt return to it (as I do to Van Morrison's Veemon Fleece) when a little peace seems in order.

- Jim T.

DREAM SMASHES

Flys At The Picnic, LP

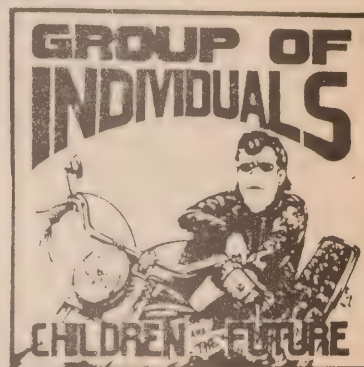
Dead Issue

A weird-sounding but superb rock band that breaks boundaries left & right. Although it sounds like they don't have many roots in punk rock, they do get as abrasive as they can. Totally offbeat riffage rips through your skull underlining hollow, haunting, melodic vocals that put you in an almost eerie state. "Edge Of The World" has to be one of last year's top tunes. Dream Smashes are often found gigging around NYC with bands of totally different natures, but that's ok 'cos people are open-minded these days, I think. This is one hot, diverse band, with a lot to offer. A good newspaper ad: If you're looking to get into some alternative music, The Dream Smashes is a good place to start. Trash all your Elvis Costello records. Buy this. Then commit suicide.

- John Lisa



If Chicago is the city of broad shoulders, then how do you explain Steve Albini? Just asking... Anyway, here's a listen to some very good vinyl that's blown our way from the Windy City of late. First off there's a new lp from NAKED RAYGUN, XXX. (Caroline) A new Raygun album is always a welcomed event, and this one is no exception - esp. coming so soon on the heels of last year's Jettison. Nothing's changed much - same grinding punk-buzzsaw guitar, same anthemic vocals (half British Oi, half Misfits howl), and the usual assortment of raise-yer-fist-and-chant-along choruses and melodies. The Raygun guys seem an obvious influence of GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS, whose 45, "Children Are The Future" (Underdog) will benefit charity. The grinding guitars and chanted vocals may say Raygun, but the overall poppy sound reminds me more of Chi-town's Reaction Formation (who?? I hear you all ask...well, you hadda be there...). Moving into the future, SPONGETUNNEL updates the Stooges' classic "1969" with the more contempo "1989," (Underdog) a little lighter & catchier than the Igster but still a classic dose of Midwest punk. The b-side has the 'tunnel boys thrashing and trashing two covers that both deserve the abuse, one by Dionne Warwick and one by Joan Jett. Does that make Spongetunnel anti-feminist or just anti-schlock? If you dig 6T's sounds, I heartily recommend the psychedelic "Rayon EP" by PRECIOUS WAX DRIPPINGS. "4 kick ass killer jams," it says on the sleeve. Well, not quite. A-side gives ya 2 psyched-out garage-grunge rockers, distorto gtr and distanced vocals sounding verry tripped out. On the flip, they do a Tom Petty Meets Husker Du kinda folk/rock/noise thing called "Boston" that's swell in its own right. If you like Flaming Lips type stuff, check this out. Also in a paisely kind of mood comes "The Super Sonic 7 Inch" EP (Big Block) from MATERIAL ISSUE. The glistening Rickenbacker 12-string intro sent a tingle right up by spine (Byrds-mania lives!). Is "Renee Remains The Same" an update of "Walk Away, Renee"? Could be - same pretty folk/rock melody, tight harmony vox, and chimey chords as the Left Bank. The b-side is faster and punkier. Plimsouls, anyone? Finally there's the new 45 by GREEN, entitled "R.E.M." (Pravda) Nice joke there, Jeff. Still, I'd like the record better if it rocked out more - more Ken Kurson harmony vocals, more silly falsetto, more noise! This sounds like Mr Lescher & Co. have been listening to a lot of mid-tempo Kinks - not a bad sound, just not my favorite one. Finally, there's a full-fledged lp from URGE OVERKILL called Jesus Urge Superstar (Touch & Go). Although it has moments, these guys wear too much black clothing and drone too much for my tastes. The songs lack anything you can really sink your teeth into, and I found them similarly lacking when I saw them perform last summer too.



addresses

| | |
|---|--|
| Big Block Records 1828 Sherry St. Addison, IL 60101 | Touch & Go PO Box 25520 Chicago IL 60613 |
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| Pravda Records 3728 N. Clark St. Chicago, IL 60613 | Underdog Records PO Box 182 Chicago IL 60613 |
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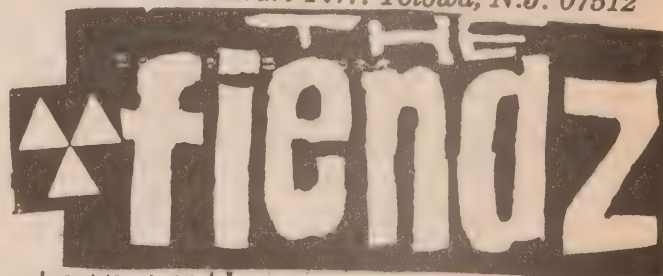
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© 1/89 John Crawford

THE UNDEAD

Act Your Rage, lp/cassette

Post Mortem, Box 358, New Milford, NJ 07646

It's been almost two years since we've had anything from the Undead, but judging by this, worth the wait. According to the enclosed flyer, this stuff dates back to '84-'86, and was snagged by the usual label/distribution hassles until former Misfit Bobby Steele produced and released it on his own.

Steele handles all the guitar and bass work, and is teamed with Tim Taylor and Eddie Enzyme (formerly of U.S.Chaos). As for the tracks: "Autograph" has a sound reminiscent of the previously released "1984;" the "Eve Of Destruction" cover has heartfelt and understandable lyrics (for a change), but my personal fave is a jab at romance called "Put Your Clothes Back On." I liked this and would've actually bought it if I didn't get it for nothing, and what better praise can a reviewer give?

- Dado

SACRED HATE

Sacred Hate, LP

%Ron Gordon, PO Box 6480, Youngstown, OH 44501

This lp was recorded in January of '88 but not released independently by the band until recently. At first, I was tempted to dismiss it as your basic run of the mill hardcore (nothing wrong with that, just sometimes musically unoriginal). But after a few more spins and a browse thru the lyric sheet, I realized that would've been a mistake. The band's songwriting can't be ignored, esp. on down tempo cuts like "Pleasant Dreams" and "Shadow Of Fear." The inner sleeve was full of photos of punks moshin' and slamming, but I hope they and anyone else listening to this takes the time to hear what's being said. Three cheers for meaningful content.

- DADO

MADBALL

"Ball Of Destruction" EP

In-Effect

I half-expected this 8-song 7" to be a joke, since it's Roger (Agnostic Front) Miret's 12-yr old brother backed by 3 members of AF, moshing thru some old AF demos and whatnot. Surprise, surprise, the kid can sing. Sing? Shit, the kid can wail! Vinnie Stigma's trademark buzzsaw guitar cuts thru the tunes like Ol' Leatherface's chainsaw and since nothing on this record last longer than a minute or so, you can't exactly get bored waiting for the songs for to end. NY/HC rules, ok? And God only knows what the kid'll be like once he turns 15!

- Jim T.

The Undead

photo by Andy Peters



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